

# PHILOSOPHICAL MEMOIRES

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## CONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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Allan M. Savage

PHILOSOPHICAL MEMOIRES: Constructing  
Christian Theology in the Contemporary World

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## PART ONE

### MY PERSONAL PROCESS OF ONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

#### Introduction

No one in philosophy is ever completely original, obviously. The idea of philosophical originality is practically a contradiction in terms, if one takes the terms literally, since philosophy already presumes a history. An original thinker places himself within an existent current of philosophy and, cannot not presume something of the history of the attempts of his predecessors even in his own originality.<sup>1</sup>

I discuss my personal process of re-constructing a Christian theology in this book from a subjective point of view. Therefore, by re-constructing a Christian theology I mean engaging dialectically with the world I have inherited and the world that I subsequently create for myself. Within this process, in fact, I am in dialogue with two subjective worlds, as it were. The world that I have inherited is subjectively interpreted; the world I construct is subjectively created. In the process of constructing Christian theology, I contrast contemporary theological understanding to traditional theological understanding that has become inordinately influenced by Hellenistic, or Ancient Greek philosophical understanding. Leslie Dewart's efforts at dehellenization are an attempt at a new philosophical construction within theological knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on his insights, I concentrate in this work on the way belief has been shaped by relational, as opposed to merely ideological, forces. Hence, "roles" as opposed to "goals" are the subject of my attention. My theological construction is based upon human insight that has come into being with the advent of society and, in particular, Western or Hellenistic society. That is to say, my process of theological construction is one

that is critical of copula verb “to be.” For, “to be,” means to be some-thing joined to, or connected with, an underlying reality. This investigation of contemporary theological construction reveals that a particular dichotomous philosophy has mistakenly become regarded as necessary for theology. This philosophical error may be corrected by viewing understanding as a unified phenomenological activity, not as a dichotomous scholastic or theoretical activity. This is a difficult task for the contemporary thinker and requires effort because “the intuitive view is that there is a way things are that is independent of human opinion, and that we are capable of arriving at belief about how things are that is objectively reasonable, binding on anyone capable of appreciating the relevant evidence regardless of their ideological perspective.”<sup>3</sup>

The personal process of constructing Christian theology arises within my experience. My experience may be negative or positive which in turn affects my understanding and subsequent social construction. Reflecting upon my experience negatively, I may conclude that my civilization is dying. Things are not the way they once were. Life is decadent. The Christian moral values that I once acknowledged publicly are challenged within my society and often appear as conflicting opinions. Media headlines suggest to me that, world destruction is near given the perpetual state of war and conflict in which my world seems to be engaged. The moral principles that formerly held my life together seem to be disintegrating as the traditional supports of my social life are undermined.

Reflecting on my experience positively, the world goes on because I, like the ordinary person, am cheerful and optimistic. The ordinary person believes that life is good and he or she feels a part of a larger rhythm of creation despite its apparent corruption. Ordinary people do experience an abundance of the life in which they participate. Often this optimistic attitude is expressed in religious life, that is, vowed life, or in a secular and respectful attitude toward life and creation in general. Devout people often experience

religion as one reality among others, such as the philosophical, political and economic movements that have characterized human development throughout the ages.

Scholarship and the process of theological construction are not ends in themselves. Each is a human intellectual and social activity. Neither produces any philosophical system. Neither is permanent but only supplies temporary points of view that are contingent upon the cultural context of the thinker. Once I have given meaning to my experience I have entered the realm of philosophical discussion. Philosophical discussion is an activity reserved to humans living in society. Brute animals, because they lack a philosophical sense, cannot attribute meaning to their experience. The members of human societies and institutions intentionally relate themselves to the events within their common experience. The simpler stages of anthropological and cultural development, such as, tilling, fabricating tools and shelters, along with the rearing of the young, become established as habitual intentional activities as time goes on. These stages, in due time, gave rise to new experiences and subsequent interpretation that demanded further re-adjustment within a given society, or within the institutions of that society. Thus, the human world continually becomes more philosophically complicated in its theological construction and this affects the religious lives of its inhabitants.

In the process of constructing Christian theology I do not suggest a metaphysical ideology as the basis for theological construction. Theological construction is rooted in philosophical wonder that is prior to the formulation of any metaphysical ideology. Philosophically speaking, the Psalmist has it right, I believe. "What is man that you should care for him?" <sup>4</sup> Further, the inquiry into human nature is prior to the inquiry into divine nature. As I come to realize the need to possess my own soul, as Augustine did, I seek God in which to rest my soul. <sup>5</sup> Existentially, I am linked to an earlier age in theological construction and I recognize that present day problems are simply the logical outcome of

the so-called Modernist Crisis of a not so-long-ago age. In the process of my theological construction, I relate then to experiential issues arising out of theological Modernism and not speculative philosophical problems.

My Christian theological construction is based upon God's revelation within the ecclesial context. The ecclesia is formed by being "called out" of the general social context or cultural milieu in response to the divine summons. This being "called out" in response to the divine summons gives Christian theological construction its unique character and capacity to express God's revelation. All social institutions are the means whereby individuals are able to relate to each other. Family, government, church, agriculture, trade, etc. are examples. The decay or the growth of any one of them will have a corresponding affect on the individuals making up the social institution. Theological construction cannot take place in a self-defensive and self-isolating context characteristic of decay. Rather, it needs a constructive and supportive context characteristic of growth. The faith of individuals, I included, needs the instruction and nourishment provided through divine revelation. In undertaking this reflection, I am not intending a devotional or pious work, nor do I intend an exclusively professional academic and philosophical one. However, I do intend to address the educated and theologically interested reader. I do this inspired by Leslie Dewart and through the original insight of George Tyrrell. Of George Tyrrell (+1909) more will be said later. In short, this book is an attempt to satisfy my intellect where traditional understanding seems to have failed.

My contemporary Christian theological construction is based on my "style of life," not upon the natural or supernatural schema of traditional theological understanding. Christian theological construction must occur in a specifically religious context. Further, theological construction is proper to human beings, who cannot help but discover themselves as being Christian or non-Christian. Theological construction discloses the humanitarian

characteristics of self-discovery that distinguish the thinking animal from the brute animal. Thus, Christian theological construction possesses its own special worth with respect to knowledge and human action. Christian theological construction, engaging emotion, feeling and intuition, enables me to encounter that which is transcendent as my consciousness extends beyond my sensible experience. The purpose of this book is to relate my efforts towards formulating a correct process for Christian theological construction thus avoiding the distortions of past ideology, of present fantasy and, uncritical “new age” thought.

Christian theological construction presumes that a relationship between God and humanity has actually been established and has taken on the special features of unique personal self-discovery with distinctive insights. Therefore, I must exercise critical discernment in forming theological constructions based on my experience. Christian theological construction meets my personal needs when: 1) its purpose is related to my actual experience, 2) its purpose is discovered within my social relationships, 3) its purpose is to serve a further definite practical function of spiritual growth.

My personal process of Christian theological construction starts with the established relationship between the risen Christ and me. I must undertake the task of theological construction and may do so, without error, only insofar as I have learned to enter the corporate faith reality of the ecclesia. Since my process of contemporary Christian theological construction needs to be set within the proper background, before discussing the characteristics of my contemporary theological construction, I shall present the understanding of theology that has influenced this work.

### An Understanding of Theology

Theology began as a professional activity with the formation of the universities. Initially, it was undertaken informally within the ecclesiastical context, the vocational



guild, as it were and, its purpose was to serve the Church in establishing and formalizing her doctrine and dogma. However, I understand theology to be an evolving social construction which clarifies doctrine and dogma. My current intent is to re-think theology within an ecclesial context of faith and do so outside the ecclesiastical guild of an earlier theological age. As I use them the phenomenological term, ecclesial, reflects relationships as constitutive of the Christian communal life. The classical term, ecclesiastical, refers to the historically conditioned structure governing the Christian community. The doctrinal and dogmatic formulations extant in most ecclesiastical institutions are founded on a classical theological ideology. As a consequence of this foundation over the centuries there have been various rhetorical accretions that have clouded reflection in theology. These accretions developed into theological understandings that did not always relate well to contemporary experience of theologians. Therefore, the theological reflection that I undertake today in an ecclesial context must differ from the reflection that took place in a traditional ecclesiastical context.

The way in which I conduct my contemporary theological reflection outside of the theological guild is through critical reflection. Critical theological reflection itself is a unique human activity and an innate capacity of the human mind. Critical reflection engages theologians, philosophers and psychologists to probe into the depths of the mind to disclose an “other.” Critical theological reflection discloses the believer’s best efforts at constructing an authentic Christian anthropology. As a believer, this authentic Christian anthropology discloses an understanding of human life and purpose that enables me to evolve as a member of humanity. Thus, critical reflection in theology has three humanitarian purposes for me. The first is to relate humanly to my actual experience. The second is to disclose truth as a human relationship. The third is to grow spiritually within an ecclesial community.

In this book I reflect upon my experience outside the traditional philosophical mould of an ecclesiastical guild. I have rejected the form of expression of an earlier Medieval Christian theology, influenced, as it is, by outdated Aristotelian categories. Such theology lacks resonance with contemporary cosmology as has been noted by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, by reflecting outside the guild, I have avoided the accretions of disputed ecclesiastical, political and power-related issues that emerged in the Reformation and counter-Reformation but which today are no longer relevant. Thus, in my context I have opened the way for new reflections and theological investigations. In reflecting on my religious experience I take seriously the notion that the Enlightenment period, which began in Europe, has introduced by virtue of its epistemological, historical, and evolutionary development legitimate expressions of religious experience. In North America, given its historical and theological patrimony, theologians are intellectually connected in their thinking to problems traceable to the philosophical and theological context prevalent in preVictorian England. During this time and well into the reign of Queen Victoria (1837—1901), England remained virtually isolated from Continental and theological philosophical thought. However, a critical examination of English philosophical and theological texts of that period reveals some influence of German thought.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Rationalism was in vogue in England and on the Continent. In his review of religion in the Victorian era, Elliot-Binns distinguishes two strains of rational thought that were hostile to religious, and in particular Christian, experience. One train of thought was the overt and complete rejection of the whole Christian system, typical of France. The other train of thought, which was typical of Germany, tolerated Christianity but gradually reduced it to a mere caricature of its former self.<sup>7</sup> The existential and less rationalistic Germanic thought that later evolved into phenomenological philosophy under the influence of Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl

resonated with the English theologian George Tyrrell. Although he died before any formal development of the phenomenological school of thought in England, his thinking was definitely heading in that direction.

In constructing my philosophical position, I follow closely the existential way of thinking noted by W. K. C. Guthrie. He reminds his readers that philosophers do not think in a void. In fact, their thoughts are products of three interrelated factors: their temperaments, their experiences and, their reading of previous philosophers all of which make up their life-world.<sup>8</sup> One of the pioneers of the phenomenological and existential method of philosophy was Edmund Husserl. He taught that philosophers can reflect on all experience, inasmuch as it presents itself to consciousness, according to a clear methodological framework since all knowledge appears within a complex series of cultural contexts. Phenomenological philosophers urge that the world of experience takes precedence over the abstracted and theoretical world of the sciences. Langdon Gilkey notes that, from a personal perspective, the public task of the theologian is primarily the analysis of life with regard to its religious issues and dimensions and, only secondarily as an analysis with regard to economic, sociological or psychological dimensions, although each of these has a religious basis and ground.<sup>9</sup> As a phenomenological philosopher and theologian I conclude, therefore, that an existential reflection on constructing Christian theology in the contemporary world, although undertaken individually, is not a private enterprise.

The theological style of this book falls within Jeff Astley's understanding of doing "ordinary theology," which pays attention to personal insights arising out of experience and theological thinking. Ordinary theology takes place outside the traditional guild. According to Astley, original theology is rarely done. He maintains that theological thinking today is often undertaken as the study of other people's ideas, which is not a self-critical reflection on one's own particular religious experience and ideas.<sup>10</sup> Although

modern theology may have begun in the academy, it cannot remain in the academy as John Apczynski has shown.<sup>11</sup> Theology given its purpose, must address the questions, problems, and data that arise within all aspects of human society. The thought of any theologian, (and in the final analysis this means anyone trying to understand his or her own ultimate meaning), emerges from the *lebenswelt* (life-world) of the individual. A theologian's *lebenswelt* forms the existential milieu, in Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's sense, of the cultural, social, and religious context of life.

Theologians are continually searching for new and meaningful ways to reflect upon religious experience outside the traditional theological guild. In my approach to theological understanding I do not consider the legacy of the past as hardened and dead with respect to the present any more than I ignore the lives of those critical thinkers who have shaped the past. Although they are physically dead, from the perspective of a contemporary theological construction, the legacy of those critical thinkers who shaped the past continues to shape the present. Their theological legacy is significant not by virtue of ecclesiastical endorsement, but by virtue of its relevance to our present time and experience. Theological construction within an ecclesial context, which is greater than the mere guild, must be in dialogue with artists, musicians, novelists, poets, psychologists, and always with the Scriptures. I draw on Marshall McLuhan's insight:

One thing which characterized the finer arts—poetry, painting, music—areas with which we're all familiar—for more than a century, but certainly for the past century, has been a continued insistence on their relevance to daily living. There has been quite an impressive chorus of urgent requests in all fields that we take seriously the arts as basic social factors of enlightenment and guidance and training.<sup>12</sup>

It is quite clear then, to my mind, that my contemporary theological construction must incorporate aspects of the human temperament, experience, and understanding of both

past and current philosophers and theologians within the Western cultural context.

Eventually, in the course of history the initial diverse theological understanding of the ecclesia developed into a uniform theological construction that became normative for the Christian life, particularly in the Western Church. For example, the two early diverging and distinct schools of theology, the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools, came into being over Christological controversies. These schools reflected their respective cultural understandings. As well, these schools were never homogenous groups. As M. C. Steenberg notes, homogenous schools never existed in the concrete sense. Theologians within them may have managed to encompass convergent themes and approaches, but they never developed a uniform system.<sup>13</sup> The presence of these schools indicated that diversity was an integral aspect of the ecclesia's theological construction for some time after the death of the apostles. As the ecclesia evolved it interpreted its experience and theologically constructed itself-understanding in different fashions. Between the Judaic and Hellenistic world-views, a theological rapprochement prepared the way for a new articulation of the Christian life. No longer was the imminent return of Jesus the main focus for reflecting upon the Christian life. An interpretation of the Christian life, which drew heavily on Hellenistic philosophical ideas, subsequently cast the Christian life in a new light. And in turn, this affected theological construction within the ecclesia. The influence of Hellenistic philosophical ideas continued in the Church for centuries. As Brian Gaybba has pointed out, the various schools of reflection on the theological construction of the Christian interior life were developing long before the Reformation<sup>14</sup> The Franciscans and Dominicans were the two dominant schools, among others, which had developed to advance the theological perspectives of particular religious orders.

In the Middle Ages, a change in the structure of theological understanding concerning the Christian life came about with the controversial introduction of Aristotle's

philosophy. The scholastic method of interpretation, influenced by Aristotelian and Platonic thought patterns, was the best tool for intellectual argument in that age. Aristotelian and Platonic thought patterns were presented within Thomas Aquinas's theologically constructed synthesis of Aristotle's cosmology and the Christian message. One consequence of his theological construction was that Thomas relegated spiritual or mystical theology to a subdivision of moral theology. Eventually this theological approach became dominant in the Roman Church. To my mind, it is significant that through the acceptance of Aristotle's cosmology, Christian theology produced a very "act-centred" message that was never fully realized, nor theologically understood, by the faithful. Consequently, reflection on the Christian life developed into various static legalisms. Sandra Schneiders points out that this theologically constructed medieval synthesis held together until the middle of the 20th century, when the culture-shattering events of the two world wars, the technological revolution, various liberation movements, an explosion of knowledge and, the rapid developments in the humanities of philosophy, psychology and other social sciences, all together brought this comprehensive hold of the medieval synthesis on the Christian mind and imagination to an end.<sup>15</sup> Out of this new non-scholastic milieu diverse theological ways of thinking have been constructed and now re-shape the hermeneutic of Christian theology.

My critical reflection on the Christian theology often leads me to ask: Is church membership a prerequisite for doing theology? Can I do theology outside of the revelation in Christ? Concerning theological construction in the ecclesia some Christians saw and, continue to see, the Invisible Church contained within the Visible Church. Yet, the Invisible Church certainly is not identical or co-extensive with the Visible Church. That there are many souls within the Visible Church that do not belong to the Invisible Church and, that there are many souls not within the Visible Church that belong to the Invisible Church is

still a thoroughly orthodox and common saying,” notes Baron von Hügel.<sup>16</sup> Thomas Foudy has written of Tyrrell’s notion of the relationship between the Visible and Invisible Church: “For him the invisible Church here on earth does not extend beyond the limits of the visible Church except so far as faith extends; it includes all those who give God primacy in their lives.”<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, in undertaking a critical reflection on the Christian life as ordinary theology both theologians and religious philosophers need to “enchurch” their thinking somehow. They need to do this in order to theologically construct the historically called community. Love for God provides motivation for studying theology, which is historically, for Continental theologians, at least, tantamount to schooling in the Christian interior life. Coming to understand the things of God out of love is the beginning and the root of all theology. In short, theology is not merely an academic programme of studies arising within the medieval universities. It has a practical dimension. Brian Gaybba reminds us that the phenomenon of Liberation Theology is rooted in love. “With the sure instinct given by Love, liberation theology has “whether it realizes it or not” retrieved the classic Augustinian tradition that only love gives full understanding of the things of God.”<sup>18</sup>

From the foregoing understanding of theology how do I relate truth to love? Truth is the result of God’s love for those in the world and, of those in the world whose practical learning is with the school of the Christian interior life. Further, practical learning within the school of the interior life invites the seeker to experience God’s love outside of his or her inherited religion. Seekers of God’s love are more likely to feel their relationship with God than to understand it. The Spirit of Christ helps seekers feel the truth and then formulate it. Once formulated, the Spirit of Christ helps all feel their way deeper into this formulated truth. Thus, the *lex orandi*, the rule of prayer, is more deeply understood as a product of the community’s, not the individual’s, experience. The *lex orandi* is the theological construction of

the community's unfolding of the Christian interior life, not of an isolated and individual experience. Theological construction arising from community's experience presents the criterion for theological truth. But, theological construction does not set the criterion for private judgment. For Christian life to be healthy and bear fruit it must unfold within a community and be connected to the theological construction that constitutes the community's life. That is, the community is to be the school of the Christian interior life.

### My Personal Approach to Theology

My personal theology does not consist in a doctrinal or dogmatic representation of ecclesiastical corporate ideas. My personal theology is a reflective account of my thinking as affected by the reading and digesting of texts of other theological philosophers. To illustrate my personal theology, I offer below a selection of reflections arising within an existential theology. Initially, my personal reflections seemed new to me but I soon discovered that similar reflections had been undertaken by William Gladstone (1809—1898) and George Tyrrell (1861—1909). Even though I am writing in 2009, William Gladstone, George Tyrrell and I share the same theological cultural context. During my undergraduate years at the University of Toronto, Leslie Dewart had introduced me, in his lectures, to the theme of dehellenization in philosophical and theological thinking. When I encountered the writings of William Gladstone and George Tyrrell, I discovered that in their own context they had embarked on this theme, in its broadest sense, which had not yet been named within Western theological and philosophical circles.

In my personal approach to understanding theology, contemporary theologians, whether they are Jewish, Christian or Muslim have a personal responsibility to their respective communities. Since I am included among them my theological thinking must be carried on within, not



without, my community. Our communities mediate the experience of believers as they pass on to future generations the fruits of their theological reflection. In order for a theologian to be credible today critical reflective thinking is a requirement. I undertake critical theological thinking within an existential philosophy, which is a dehellenized philosophy. In addition to any interfaith theological discussion on revelation among Jews, Christians and Muslims, there is the further issue of critical reflective collaboration among all theological philosophers including those of non-monotheistic religions. Critical reflective collaboration is a clear, consistent, professional and systematic sharing of insights into the personal, but not private, experience of God. The sharing of such insights constitutes existential (dehellenized) theological discussion.

Philosophy, among all the disciplines available to assist me in this task of constructing Christian theology in the contemporary world, is the most fundamental one. Since it reflects my personal belief, philosophy is to be preferred to other disciplines, such as sociology or psychology, in assisting me. This is so since philosophy is a personal, but not private, way of evaluating experience, whereas psychology and sociology are corporate ways of describing religious experience. The more recent disciplines of psychology and sociology, as “soft” sciences share scientific clinical roots. G. E. Newsom notes the advent of psychology as a new discipline bringing its own significance to the world of science. He writes: “There is another development of science, that of psychology, and especially of religious psychology, which has come in with the new century and which may well be as characteristic of this century as physical science was of the last.”<sup>19</sup> This is not the case for philosophy, which is the more ancient discipline. Existential philosophical questions, not idealist questions, preoccupy me today. Existential philosophical and theological ways of thinking are the means by which I evaluate my experience as a member of a community. Even so, I do not have all the right questions to ask much less all the right answers.

To my mind, within an existential theological understanding, what is said of Christian theology may be said, *inter alia*, of Jewish and Islamic theology. An existential theology transcends cultural expression and denominational religious traditions. That is to say, an existential theology is not reserved to those theologians who officially represent the organized and visible community. Further, existential theologians recognize that not all members of the visible church belong to the invisible church and vice versa. Christian existential theology, by transcending denominational and official corporate interests, is less likely to become enslaved to an institutional and political ideology. The primary locus of an existential theology is the word of God addressed to the believer in community. Not being a member of either of the Jewish or Islamic faith communities, I do wonder to what degree this transcendence of denominational, (or sectarian), interests occurs in their theologies. Existential theology is an abandonment of the classical model of traditional theology, which has often been a polemical promulgation of doctrine and dogma. To my mind, should theological thinking fail at transcending institutional interests and become a mere servant of the visible corporate community, and not serve the believer, that failure is tantamount to a living death for both the community and believer.

Existential theology must be distinguished from religious studies, which is a separate discipline in its own right. As a distinct academic discipline religious studies has its roots in the Western academic thinking characteristic of the mid to late 19th Century. In its pedigree are listed philology, linguistics, historiography, anthropology, ethnology, archaeology, and sociology. In the contemporary academic context religious studies seeks to describe religious belief within cultural terms and always with a concern for the corporate community. Theology, however, in the contemporary philosophical context and having been influenced by the Enlightenment and Reformation, seeks knowledge not from an ideological and rationalistic

perspective but from an existential and phenomenological perspective. However, despite this evolution of theology with respect to its role, for most professionals it is still perceived to be a service limited to persons preparing to minister in a particular religious community or corporate faith tradition. Within my philosophical perspective, however, I recognize the primary role of theology as rendering a ministerium *verbi divini*, that is, a service to the Word of God. That is, revelation, in its full sense of word and sacrament, is beyond mere service to the institutional community.

Theology is nothing less than an understanding of personal religious experience, individually or collectively. As a reflection on experience, theology is not merely a theoretical discipline. As merely a theoretical discipline theology would be reserved to reflection on the Church's corporate catechism, or on the ideological doctrine or dogma of a faith tradition. Reserving reflection to the Church's catechism, or ideological doctrine or dogma, is more properly the domain of religious studies than theology. From an existential perspective, data that are the loci for theological reflection are not reserved to the classical philosophical disciplines studied by professional academics. Rather, all experiential data collectively provide a locus for theological reflection. For me as an existential theologian, there are certain *existentialia*, or existential experiences that constitute my life. They are fear, despair, love, hope, suffering, death, happiness, and guilt. Yet, these *existentialia* present only one part of my existence, the human part (*a partis hominis*). They are not of God's part (*a parte Dei*) which is also present to my existence. Thus, as an existential theologian questions arise for me that require responses from each part, God's and mine.

Scripture, not the confessional idea, is the primary and necessary datum for an existential Christian theology. This is not to deny that confessional corporate ideology, known as tradition, provides important theological data. However, confessional corporate ideology is secondary. To my mind,

the former metaphysical attempts seeking to prove that God exists are futile in the contemporary world. Further, such attempts at a metaphysical philosophy that are not rooted in experience tell us nothing. The task of the existential theologian is not look for a polemical opportunity to prove a doctrinal point. Rather, the theologian's task is to express and clarify the experience of faith, vis á vis scripture.

In contemporary Western culture the Christian life may be legally private but it is ethically and morally public. Christian theology, therefore, is ethically and morally accountable within the public forum. The accountability of Christian theology, which brings about social transformation resulting in a new social construction of the public forum, arises from the personal relationship between the individual and the public community. My Christian duty, that is to say Christian response, is not restricted to certain aspects of ecclesial life. My Christian duty is nothing less than the response to my total ecclesial life that is shaped by the larger public community. This was the thinking of William Gladstone, the 19th Century British Prime Minister, of whom more will be said later.

After Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church deliberately attempted to enter a conversation with other faith communities about religious meaning in the public forum. The theologians of Vatican II recognized that the Church is to serve humanity in its secular life. This raised the issue of the Church re-defining her theology in the public forum. Writing before Vatican II, William van de Pol, a convert to Roman Catholicism, notes that the role of serving humanity in its secular life was already part of the Church's practice although not necessarily evident to all.<sup>20</sup> Today, Christians are conversing, both intellectually and spiritually, with many other religious communities, both Christian and non-Christian. From the late 19th century onwards the Catholic Church left, to some degree, its classical corporate self-understanding, and took on a contemporary personal self-understanding. To my mind, this change in perspective was significantly promoted by the so-called Modernist thinking

within Roman Catholicism. In understanding herself from an existential perspective the Church thus abandoned the previous notion that a single cultural norm, originating in ancient Rome, could continue to determine her self-understanding.

In the contemporary North American context, the corporate Church seeks to dialogue with partners holding common beliefs wherever they may be found. Tolerance, as many of us know, is a significant virtue in the North American civic tradition. However, in addition to its positive effect, tolerance may have a negative effect as well. Too much variation in public discourse fragments civic culture. It appears to me that a workable discourse in the public forum is lacking due to an exaggeration of tolerance. As well, too much variation in belief makes dialogue among partners extremely difficult. Further, the effects of an inordinate tolerance extend beyond national boundaries. Global Westernized culture lacks an accepted theological language about meaning, value and experience in order to host a successful discourse in the public forum. As a result, I, personally am not as influential in the public forum as I may have been in the past. This leads me to conclude that Christendom, my previous ecclesiastical context, is dead or at least dying. Even though I have been born into an ecumenical context, that has been well established and can easily be distinguished from a secular context, I still experience the lack of an ecumenical public language. This lack of an ecumenical public language makes discussions with non-Catholic Christian theologians difficult for me. To add to this difficulty, science, which sets the standard for contemporary secular discussion, does not give me answers to my deeper questions of meaning. I conclude that my deeper existential questions need to be answered by philosophers and theologians and not scientists.

The Western intellectual tradition, from the Hellenists onwards, reflects a notion of an individual and collective humanum. This humanum is that which constitutes humanity. In the West it has been traditionally the goal of

society and government to enhance this humanum, through a humanitarian social construction of civic society. Only in the recent past has this goal been challenged by the concept of a sovereign individualism taking preference over the notion of an individual and collective humanum. However, in Christian existential theology, the idea of individual sovereignty is not an absolute goal. Rather, an individual must be subordinated to God in some manner. *Gaudium et Spes*: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church, of the Second Vatican Council taught that there is inherent value and meaning in the lives of individuals in this world. *Gaudium et Spes* notes that Christian humanitarianism is founded on the human dignity that is ultimately grounded through God's revelation to the Christian community, not to particular individuals. The *imitatio Christi*, then, as a particular way of life, is an embodiment of a personal and collective role in a community. It is this personal and collective role that expresses the humanum within the contemporary Christian community. Being an existential philosopher I have two tasks of equal obligation. The first is to interpret the corporate tradition of the faith to which I belong and the second is to interpret my personal experience within that corporate tradition. In my interpretation, I have noted that the theological language, once inordinately influenced by the Enlightenment, has ceased to be solely theoretical and rational. Secondly, I note that contemporary theological language is no longer separated from the human and social sciences. Theological language has become a personal expression arising out of the encounter with the social sciences. Thus, I no longer think of the social sciences in merely mechanistic terms, but rather I now think of them in humanitarian organic terms.

In my reflections I have come to agree with the thinking of Sarah Jane Boss who notes that in Western society holiness and sacredness are not perceived to be that important in the public forum. As I noted earlier a phenomenological understanding is an alternative to a theoretical understanding. A phenomenological

understanding, which is the same as an existential one, does not emphasize any acquisition of vocational skills nor does it emphasize the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the faith. The proper intent of an existential or phenomenological understanding is dehellenization of all things social which is nothing less than the conscious creation of the future of belief in holiness and sacredness in the public forum. This is a radically different view than the dominant one in our present North American culture.

Originally, theological colleges were set up to serve the academic interests of the Churches in debating various theological opinions surrounding doctrine and dogma. However, today Christian theological education is being directed towards an existential formation of the whole person in having one's mind conformed to Christ in such a way that praying and believing are one act. Given this role, Christian theology divorced from prayer is in trouble. A theology that arises from my experience of the Christian God contributes its own perspective to my conscious creation of the future of belief. In my experience, pastoral psychology and counseling, arising from an academic study of religion, address my emotional centre. However, neither psychology nor counseling addresses my spiritual centre. A pastoral theology rooted in an existential understanding, instead of psychology or counseling, helps me to order my life within the dimension of the sacred and what is holy. More attention to this will be given below.

My philosophical reflections focus on the unfinished theological business of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, namely, the so-called Modernist Movement. This Movement arose from a tension between the personal and corporate theological understanding of Catholic theologians and the Church. It challenged the dominant corporate theological mind-set of the time with its roots in the scholastic tradition. As a result, the so-called Movement was terminated by the ecclesiastical authorities and had an insecure future among Catholic theologians.

However, many of the insights that have benefited the Church have arisen from the critical scholarship of the Catholic theologians of this period. One such insight is the attention paid to personal understanding, as opposed to corporate understanding, of the experience of the faith. Charles Healey notes Tyrrell's contribution to the area of personal spirituality.<sup>21</sup> Given that Catholic theologians today accept such insights of critical scholarship is, in fact, a fulfillment of the hope of the Modernist theologian George Tyrrell.<sup>22</sup> However, to my mind the contemporary Catholic theological climate immediately prior to and since the election of Pope Benedict XVI seems to be developing away from such critical theological understanding. A particular denominational understanding, that is, the Roman, seems to be returning to take precedence over the ecumenical understanding of Vatican II. Unfortunately, this encourages a return to corporate understanding over personal understanding.

### The Existential Situation in Which I Find Myself

I find myself in an existential situation that I have not made or designed, but have inherited. I know that I cannot stop its continual evolution. Also, I know that I am personally involved in its transformation. As a Western Christian, I live within the anxiety and tension that accompany the end of conventional Christianity. But within this tension, marking the end of conventional Christianity, I see indications of a new beginning leading to a new future. These indications signal the beginning of the process of dehellenization thus enabling the conscious creation of the future of my belief.

My acceptance of the phenomenological notion of the person, as opposed to the classical notion, indicates a shift in my philosophical thinking. This shift took place later on in my ministry. About this same time there was also a shift in the understanding of that which I understood as sacred. I no longer consider as sacred the feudal and monarchical



society, which had given its social structure to the visible church. Rather, an industrial and democratic society, which gives its social structure to the visible church, is the society I consider sacred. Indeed, with this shift in my understanding, based on my experience, I now know that the true church is often to be found among those who have been excommunicated from the visible Church. Further, I acknowledge that those who are not members of the visible church may enjoy the benefits of her activity as a sacred and social institution. But, they are not direct sharers in her sacred activity. This does not mean to my mind, however, that those outside the visible limits of the Church are not members of the actual Church in some manner.

As a Christian, I have no objective philosophy of my own, but must rely on that of the community. My personal philosophical reflections, however, arise out of the world of my subjective inner experience of my community's objective philosophy. Similarly, I note that pagan religions have various philosophies to explain and interpret the experience of their adherents. As I noted above, Christian existential theology differs from Christian speculative theology in that existential theology takes human experience, as opposed to ideology, as its primary subject matter. Thus, given that as subject matter an ideological historical record is secondary, I consider the historical record as supplemental datum for reflection. In other words, my theological reflection belongs to the category of personal experience, not the category of an objective philosophical statement.

In my existential encounter with God, I transcend the boundaries of my creaturely existence in such a way that I become more strikingly humanitarian. In other words, I understand myself holistically. Such holistic understanding is not reserved to mystics. Holistic understanding is at the center of Christian life. I have come to know God as I have come to know any other person, that is, through mutual self-giving. This required a philosophical and theological response from me as God was revealed to me. However, as a

philosopher and as a theologian, I continue to respond to revelation differently. As a philosopher I respond to the existential probabilities offered through revelation, whereas, as a theologian I respond to revelation in the concrete phenomenon of existence. As with any personal relationship, the encounter with God defies objectivism, but not objectivity. I remind the reader that objectivism belongs to a non-dehellenized philosophy which preserves the past, whereas, objectivity belongs to a dehellenized philosophy that constitutes the present conscious creation of the future of belief. If I factor out the conscious creation of the future of my belief I am taking away that which is most strikingly humanitarian in me, that is, that I am greater than the sum of my individual parts.

### Theology and the Individual in Community

In the balance of this chapter I present my thoughts on the secondary role of the *ministerium verbi divini* noted above. Even though God is the primary one to be revealed in word and sacrament, I have reflected upon the philosophical response to revelation given by me in creating my future of belief. For many believers, our experience is that we are estranged from the religion we inherited. To my mind, this estrangement is due to the end of conventional Christianity and the death of the traditional concept of God. The cultural conventions developed and designed in the past to protect me from anxiety are inadequate and unsuccessful today. Often my experience leads me to conclude that God is not in his heaven and all is not well. In response to this state of affairs, new cultural safeguards are in the process of being created to meet my present needs. However, their success seems somewhat relative and somewhat limited. As an existential Christian philosopher and theologian, I do not accept the Gospel message as merely a product of culture. Yet, the Gospel message is largely a product of the cultural milieu in which it was formed. Contemporary forms of cultural expression, conceptions, and customs, as well as

Christianity's spirit and mentality are rooted in the world of Greco-Roman-Germanic civilization, which in turn has its roots in Hellenic culture.

Cultural influences notwithstanding, Catholic theology supplies an intellectual embodiment and expression of religious experience evoked by the preaching of Christ. The preaching of Christ remains substantially the same in my cultural experience even though Christ and I are separated by two thousand years of cultural differences. I understand that the Church's religious teaching must be in harmony with the mind of the age and that religion is an ever-varying expression of individual spiritual experience. Yet, as a religion, Christianity is a doctrinal system and a collective construct of a human community. This doctrinal system is a construction, not of poetical, but of theological, philosophical, ethical, scientific and historical beliefs and conceptions evoked by the preaching of Christ. My critical reflective appreciation on theological construction leads to personal self-discovery, that is, to the act of seeing for myself and to the act of doing for myself. My task as a theologian is to clarify the intersubjectivity, which exists between God as subject and me as subject. My theological self-discovery can have a subsequent effect on the moral and social life of the community. History shows that almost all of substantial philosophical and theological advancement has not been the work of officials, but rather of self-motivated individuals who have to some extent corrected and modified the system and often in opposition to officialdom.

The philosophy, most suitable for me to disclose what I know, is phenomenology. As a philosophy of consciousness, phenomenology enables me to be conscious of my experience of the moment. Only with such conscious understanding can my Christian experience be meaningful. Phenomenology assists in discerning the meaning of me-as-subject created in God's image and likeness. As a philosophy of consciousness, phenomenology is proper for the Catholic tradition of theological interpretation. Natural

theology, on the other hand, is somewhat outside the Catholic tradition of theological thinking. Traditional Catholic theologians generally view natural theology more as a philosophy than a theology. This, it seems, was the mind of Tyrrell. John Root writes: "Before the critical year of 1900, Tyrrell wrote several articles in which he analysed the thought of popular evolutionists, criticized both Naturalism and Natural Theology."<sup>23</sup> It could be argued that a special task of Catholic metaphysics, which does not belong to natural theology, but which is more properly phenomenological, is to show the grounds for the total consciousness of the world. Even so, Catholic theologians are not central to church's life. The *sensus fidelium* is. The Church could get along without a professional theological class but it could not get along without the *sensus fidelium*.

History shows that controversial issues in religion introduced by new scientific knowledge in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were, in the American Church, at least, contested at the pastoral or practical level. To contest issues at the pastoral and practical level is characteristic of the North American temperament. However, the controversial issues in religion in France were contested at the level of theological argument, which is characteristic of the Continental temperament. These differing temperaments caused problems. One problem was that French thinkers could not understand the non-metaphysical or practical language of the North Americans. The French theologians tended to favour a theoretical and idealistic approach within their thinking. In England and the Continent, liberal Catholics attempted to integrate the new scientific knowledge within the teaching authority of the Church. The Modernists, it seems, attempted to reconcile the conflict between the Church and new scientific knowledge by altering the meaning of dogma and Church authority. Unlike Christian philosophy, Christian theology involves the process of Divine self-revelation. For the French and Italian Modernists, a life of philosophical study was natural and often followed upon the life of contemplative prayer. Many

Modernist theologians accepted that a saintly life replaced the importance of understanding theological doctrine and dogma. In Tyrrell's time there was a trend developing, which is still somewhat in evidence today, away from professional theologians serving the doctrinal and dogmatic needs of the Church. That trend was, and is, to serve the existential and practical needs of the individual in community.

The existential and practical needs of the believing community notwithstanding, theological construction has remained to a large degree a theoretical catechetical activity in the institutional Church. A theoretical catechetical activity is not primarily an activity of the *sensus fidelium*. Theoretical theological construction has deep roots going back to intertestamental times. The need to construct a theology in the Gentile-Christian Church arose from the belief that the conception of God as the Father of Christ and, of Christ as the Son of God, must be demonstrated positively as a universal truth of reason, even if rooted in pagan Hellenist philosophy. However, contemporary theology, as a human discipline needs to take into account all revealed religious experience, not just Christian. This is so since existential interpretive issues are common to all not just Christians. All believers are caught up in the existential transition to a new expression and practice of their faith. Classically, theology is a labor of reason that has recognized and included revelation as gift within the Jewish, Islamic and Christian perspectives. Still, it must be remembered that theology is an after-thought in our understanding. Tradition, notwithstanding, from an existential and ecumenical perspective it matters little that Christian theology has developed in Roman, Reformed and Protestant terms.

An existential theology, within contemporary Christian ecclesiology, presents a perspective that brings about an end to the antithesis between Rome and the Reformation. Thus, the new Christian outcome may be neither Roman nor Reformed. I find this an exciting possibility for theologians. Any new Christian outcome would require an existential

posture similar to that recognized by Maude Petre who was sympathetic to the so-called Modernist movement. Within such an existential posture, however, a Christianity understood without Christ becomes, not a new Christianity, but a new social ideal. Christianity understood with a mystical, but not historical, Christ is not a new Christianity but another religion. Further, Christianity understood with Christ as a moral ideal, not worthy of worship, is not new Christianity, but an adaptation of Christian teaching to other religious or ethical systems. It is clear that in Christian theology certain developments, such as the new cults, are not proper evolutionary developments at all. Rather they are substitutions for authentic Christianity, which has a better chance of survival in its classical form rather than in any new cultic form. Contemporary Christianity needs an existential theology in order to take on proper interpretive tasks in this age. Otherwise it has no reason for existence. In our contemporary context, with an emphasis on the needs of the individual, there is a danger that the Church, as a social community, may be understood as unnecessary for the spiritual life. This need not be the case. One must not forget that it is through the Church as community that new generations are introduced to the Christian faith. It must not be forgotten that one task of a theologian is the scientific analysis of public life and of communal experience with regard to religious issues.

Tertullian, the Carthaginian theologian, who died circa 230 spoke of the “natural man” simple, rude, uncultured, untaught and, not yet ruined by Greek education as being *anima naturaliter Christiana*. Tertullian invited his readers to return to their individual religious experience given that it is prior to any thought or theory. In this return they could explore the spiritual life in order to find the Christian route to God. Similarly, as a philosophical thinker, Socrates desired to help clarify the thinking of poets, politicians and whomever he met in market place, young and old. We know that Socrates did not initiate a system of philosophy. Rather, he took a rational approach to thinking. At this point, I note

Kristina Stöckl's timely observation. "Modern man is shaped by the Enlightenment, not only insofar as he has become autonomous in relation to preconceived foundations of a religious or traditional kind, but also to the extent that rationality itself has been recognized as not providing a foundation." <sup>24</sup> Today, for many religious philosophers an existential issue is that God may have died in the mass culture of the nineteenth century. However, it is also an issue that God may return making use of new images and new symbols. Interpreting these new images and symbols is another task of the existential theologian.

As a theologian, when I articulate these ideas and expressed them in a language that makes sense in contemporary Western culture, I discover that theology cannot do without a religious philosophy. With the assistance of an existential religious philosophy, then, the task of the theologian becomes a relative work. The work of the theologian today is conceived differently than in the days of the great theological systems, which dominated the Medieval universities. Developments in philosophy have always preceded developments in theology. Thus, there likely is no final philosophy or theology. To my mind, a primary task of the Christian theologian is to make known the great abiding truths of Christianity to a new generation. The principle merit and usefulness of theology is to satisfy the expectation of the Christian believer in this life. In attempting to satisfy the needs of the believer I make a distinction between the task of the theologian and the task of the spiritual counselor. The theologian answers needs arising within the revealed faith. The counselor answers needs arising within the human spirit. I am of the opinion, however, that an existential theology may address both within the context of a believing community.

Contemporary social psychologists first ask in their inquiry: what were the experiences that presented themselves to unscientific minds? Secondly, they ask: what do these experiences that presented themselves signify for science? Theologians first ask in their inquiry: what are the

experiences that present themselves via revelation? Secondly, they ask: what do those experiences that present themselves signify for theology? In their thinking theologians may give a conscious account of their experience using psychology, yet never fully understand their experience as psychologists. This is so since no two theologians construct their life-world identically, but each constructs it as a unique centre of interest and meaning. When I became aware of this unique construction of the human world, which is an illusion from the point of view of classical philosophy, that is, it is a psychological fiction I recognized it reflected a different, not contradictory, order to things. In this different order of things, constituted by personal interest and meaning, I recognized my individuality, not individualism, as subordinated to, yet dependent upon, the collective interest. As well, within my experience these questions presented themselves: has philosophy's role been taken over by psychology? Will psychology fail as a philosophy? These are questions, I believe, which have been raised in the experience of many other contemporary theologians.

History shows us that relatively few individuals have developed a profound sense of personal connectedness with other persons and their physical or external world. *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, or the sense of universal interrelatedness interpreted as 'social interest,' has never been formally taught Catholic theological schools. Heinz and Rowena Ansbacher have made the annotation that this term, coined by Alfred Adler (1870—1937), despite alternative translations, is most adequately translated as social interest, denoting "the innate aptitude through which the individual becomes responsive to reality, which is primarily the social situation."<sup>25</sup> Much of our history, even though lived through democratic and religious institutions, has been preoccupied with the conquest and exploitation of the external world. This conquest and exploitation of the external world included people seen as objects. Power and might have been sought through covert and overt,



manipulative and competitive movements, which are exploitive. I can't help wondering how different would the world be had our ancestors rejected Cartesian dualism, and opted for a holistic understanding. It often seems to me that my world has always been such that virtue is seldom rewarded. I often seem to lack the social interest of loving myself in ways that stimulate a charitable love for others. I seem to have philosophically victimized myself through an unworkable and false dichotomy between the temporal and spiritual, and between rejecting this world and loving God. To reject the world is impossible. However, I have come to realize that my spiritual life, or loving God, is such that it is not in the power of others to take it from me.

The philosophical language of my theological construction is derived from intelligible concepts. By way of contrast, my language inspired by revelation is derived from intuitions. Theological construction is a perennial intellectual phenomenon proper to each person who is spiritually alive and active. It is to be remembered that theological constructs, like all theoretical constructs, are merely a roadmap for future speculations. At times, contemporary theologians think somewhat as poets. Such theologians translate their intuition of reality into concrete, heart-moving images. However, following the mind of George Tyrrell, it is to the saints, and not the poetic theologians, that I attribute the growth of my Christian belief, which has been prefigured by the prophets. I do not understand "saints" to mean the canonized Saints of the Church who help me in my Christian belief. I agree with

Maude Petre's observation that Tyrrell's appeal was to the mystical apprehension of the saint rather than to the closely-reasoned arguments of the theologian; and if, through all the vicissitudes of his mental career, he preserved a certain allegiance to St. Thomas, it was because he believed that at bottom the teaching of the great doctor was far more spiritual than the later developments of scholasticism.<sup>26</sup>

As a matter of history canonized Saints have not always been the best moulders of the Catholic faith. Rather, the healthy growth of my faith depends upon the Christian Spirit which is present to various degrees in the lives of all the faithful. Thus, my spiritual progress reflects a deeper reading of myself and of reality. It is through transcending the illusion of an absolute being by the judgments of my conscience that I progress spiritually. Thus, there is no progress in goodness, that is, the loving of what is right. There is progress only in ethics, the doing of what is right.

As I passed out of childhood, physically, mentally and morally, I became an adult agent. Further, as adult agent, I am also an agent and co-creator, not merely a creature-agent. As co-creator I share in that divine agency which is consciously sympathetic and co-operative with the *intentio naturae* of which I am a part. Within the *intentio naturae* I distinguish between the “I” that lives as a separate human organism and the “I” that is a conscious subject and agent within the whole natural social process. Thus, not only am I capable of self-formation *ab intra*, but also am capable of a free self-adjustment to the universal good, *ab extra*. Theologically speaking, then, I am able to pass from the bondage of the law to the liberty of the Gospel. Many Christian mystics have felt the need to identify some invisible spiritual Church, some Communion of Saints, some mystical body of Christ, or organism of members manifesting the one and the same spirit in an endless variety of ways. This is not so in my case. But should this ever be the case that I become a part of such an invisible spiritual Church my separate self would necessarily communicate immediately with God.

In the reformulation of my theological constructions, it is within the general life of the community that I am to look for that revelation of God, in Christ. To many people today the traditional concept of a transcendental God is quite dead, but there is a definite movement to encounter an imminent God. Related to this is a strong movement to find a language and a construct amenable to both secular humanists and

representatives of various religious groups. Humanitarianism, as opposed to humanism, provides a possibility for such a language and construction. The spiritual need for an object of devotion and a frame of reference for my spiritual experience suggest an innate urge proper to all humanity to worship something. I worship through faith since certainty is impossible. I suggest that humanitarianism is the most suitable term to describe the advanced state of maturity in which I feel myself as an integral part of humanity sharing past, present and future problems. From a humanitarian point of view the real question for me is: What does Catholicity do for my moral and spiritual elevation? The question is not: How many millions of people does Catholicism number among its adherents? The collective mind, sentiment, custom, and morality of a community or society, is an educational opportunity and standard for my individual mind. My mind must be formed upon this communitarian standard (the *sensus fidelium* in the case of the Church) which others must be able to recognize. In this way I am capable of critical reflection through which my community of faith may be improved and developed. To my mind, there is something in every individual, a sort of spiritual ambition and desire of true self-possession that makes one admire those who can suffer and endure life's problems for the sake of truth and the principle love, or which is the same thing, the reconstruction of Christian theology.

## HEHELLENIZATION: THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

### A Personal Reflection

Having come to appreciate the influence of Leslie Dewart in my academic career, my intention now is to provide for the reader a reflective account of the development of my own philosophical thinking from my undergraduate years to the writing of this book. I make this

reflective account deliberately and consciously. My motivation to offer this reflection in the public forum is that there may be other philosophers, or theologians, with similar interests. I present this reflection not as a chronological or historical sequence of events that represent stages of my philosophical development over time but, rather, as an invitation for the reader, in light of the experience of reading this book, to revisit his or her own thinking. That is to say, dates and occasions marking my various philosophical conversions, that is, when I stopped believing “that” and began believing “this,” is not my intent here. Rather, I reflect on the existential context of a series of conscious realizations in my thinking that represent the phenomenological moments of insight that constituted essential changes in what I believe. My personal understanding of philosophy, which is in sympathy with that of Plato and Plotinus, is that philosophy is an intellectual and meditative activity. Further, this philosophical and meditative activity relates me to my environment from which I have become, in fact, differentiated. These philosophical and meditative activities have provided insights that have allowed me to construct and continue to re-construct a Christian theology.

Like many other students down through history, I began my philosophical questioning during my undergraduate years studying classical philosophy, which I later came to reject. During these years, however, there was not an immediate and total rejection of classical philosophy. In practice, I took what “worked” from classical philosophy and rejected what was irrelevant to my experience of the day. Today, the rejection of what is irrelevant to my experience, or existential condition, unlike during my undergraduate years, is more thoroughly thought out and consciously maintained. Over time, I have come to agree with Christopher Macann that, from a philosophical perspective it is not that phenomena somehow manifest or present being to me in my experience, but rather that my experience of being manifests itself phenomenally.<sup>27</sup> Today,

I do not consider classical Hellenist ontological philosophy as the necessary and unique philosophical underpinning common to all human thinking. I once thought that to be the case, however. Now, I recognize that classical Hellenist ontological philosophy is only one point of view within the evolutionary process of the various philosophical perspectives that constitute human thinking.

Like many philosophers of the Catholic tradition I sought contact with a metaphysical reality through a contemplative and transcendental philosophy, Thomism to be exact. In the initial years of my philosophical thinking, I accepted uncritically that reality was disclosed a priori in formal ideological structures that mediated my experience. However, I later came to realize that experience did not disclose, nor confirm, such structures that I had presumed to be there and affect my life. Instruction by Dr Leslie Dewart helped me understand that a phenomenological point of view did present, in practice, a disclosure of conscious relations within my life. I discovered that transcendental phenomenology is an approach that discloses the conscious relations that I do, in fact, construct. There were no a priori structures that revealed to me reality in itself. Thus, like René Descartes, I abandoned any ideology but did not assume a cogito or similar condition of doubt. In my case, self-reflection, which affirmed my conscious existence, replaced the Cartesian cogito as a moment of activity in my philosophical thinking. My conscious personal state became my “moment of activity” to understand and make sense of my experience. It is at this point, according to Stöckl that I truly entered the modern condition. “The notion of modernity as a condition refers to the experience of modernization and to a critical reflection upon this experience. Modernity in this sense stands for the present condition in which the self finds itself in and for the task of having to make sense of this condition.”<sup>28</sup> Such understanding and making sense of experience is limited to the immediate context. This must be the case, I believe. I cannot respond to others, or myself, from a prior conscious

state given that I am not conscious of a pre-conscious state. Having understood this, I came to question in my meditations whether or not the scholastic philosophical ideas that I inherited from my Western culture, in fact, did exist independently of my consciousness. I concluded that they did not. I came to the conclusion that I intentionally create them through an awareness of my relationships with the world around me.

In my reflections I noted that I am able to distinguish between my being and my becoming, but I am not able to separate my being from my becoming. As well, I am conscious that my being and my becoming together constitute a simultaneous event, or moment, which leads me to conceive them as equi-primordial. I conceive, not perceive, them as such since I am not aware of my being, or my becoming, as somehow constructed outside of my conscious experience. Some philosophers suggest a logical priority of being over becoming but that is an arbitrary decision and I have no experience to support that such is, in fact, the case. I experience my being and my becoming as a unity within the present moment constituted by my relationships such that I experience no qualitative difference between the two. In my experience, a logical priority of being over becoming is an artificial and analytical mental construct that may or may not be actually true. A logical priority of being over becoming may, however, be a useful philosophical fiction. Therefore, for purposes of discussing with others the development of individual and collective meaning, I will continue to employ the understanding of a logical priority until further insight, or clarity, on the issue is given. I do experience, however, my becoming as a differentiation within my being wherein subjectivity, not subjectivism, is given the priority for meaningful interpretation. To my mind there are at least two sets of terms not to be confused within philosophy. The terms “subjectivity” and “objectivity,” are not to be confused with the terms “subjectivism” and “objectivism.” The former, are

phenomenological, that is, qualitative terms, whereas, the latter, are scholastic, that is, quantitative terms.

In this presentation of the development of my philosophical understanding I depart from the traditional Western perspective, which follows Parmenides who believed in subordinating becoming to being. Following the view that subordinates becoming to being the Platonic and neo-platonic philosophers assigned real, but ideal, forms to what they held to be a higher realm of being. However, they did not assign any reality to the relationships among their ideal forms. They gave ideal forms considered materially, although they do not exist, a priority over relationships. This classical philosophical understanding is not consistent with my experience. Platonic, and some neo-platonic philosophers, continue to assign material forms to their sense experience, which they hold as belonging to a lower realm of being. This also, is not consistent with my experience. I see no reason to continue to hold to the existence of material forms. I adopt this position, or stance, since out of my experience, which is that my consciousness does not analyze being and subsequently discover a framework of material forms. Rather, I experience that my human consciousness recognizes being in relation to others, be they subjects or objects. In other words, I do not distinguish a hierarchy of classical forms. My experience is that my consciousness seeks essential principles within my self. That is, I differentiate between that which is “I” and that which is “not I.” I am aware of my conscious self, that is, “I,” as manifested through my body, yet as differing from my body. As a human being, I do not exist as a static entity separate from my body. I experience myself to be an incarnated entity in relationship to other bodies, be they incarnated or not. By incarnated I mean living or animated and possessing a soul (psyche). As a human incarnation, I exist in a certain way such that I relate myself to myself, consciously or unconsciously. As an incarnation, I experience my self as constituted by dynamic relationships and not merely as an ideal subject. Nor do I experience

myself as a dichotomized physical being, but as individuated reality capable of being present to others. I distinguish three unique existential moments of awareness in myself. These are the realization of my capacity for reflexive thinking, the realization of my individuality and the realization of my integrity. I am able to differentiate, but not separate, these three realizations within my conscious existence. Further, I continue to become increasingly aware of them as my understanding of their significance grows.

Because of my relationships I am conscious that I exist not only for myself but also for that which is other than me. In fact, my experience is not confined to my incarnated, individuated being. Rather, in my existence I am holistically alive and my significance is derived from relationships within my environment. Being alive, I am, by constitution, greater than the sum of my individual parts. That is, I am holistically constituted. In my existential constitution I am able to refer me to myself through my capacity for reflection that results in differentiation. My construction of relationships arises from a conscious differentiation on my part and not from any a priori condition imposed from outside of my experience. Alternatively expressed, my reconstruction reflects my relational experience. It is a reconstruction from differentiation rather than a reconstruction from dichotomous being.

It is within a relational experience that my self-disclosure occurs. In this self-disclosure, I become aware of myself, as subject and as agent. I had no sense of my self as subject and as agent when I perceived myself as integrated, that is, as undifferentiated being. As I differentiate my self from my body I do so in the manner that every self does. The more I identify my self as subject and as agent the more I identify with every other subject and agent. Further, by constituting my self as a conscious, external, self-manifestation of my incarnated and individuated being, that is, as I constitute my personality, I am able to place my self in an appropriate relationship with my environment, or



universe, of which I have become conscious and from which I am differentiated.

I, as a self, do not have a structure as an object. In fact, I am devoid of structure when I consider my self as a self-constituted subject. Structure is a mechanical concept, whereas, constitution is an organic concept. At each conscious moment in time, I consider my self, and ought to be considered by others, as constituted as a dynamic subject, not as a static object. I am alive when identifying my self as a subject to others, as well as a subject to my self. From this perspective, I am able to constitute an appropriate relationship with the environment, or universe, from which I have become consciously differentiated. Through this process of differentiation, I become conscious of an original existential stance and an original transcendental stance, which are co-terminus in and, constitutive of, my personal presence. In other words, I experience transcendence as immanence and vice versa. In this way I am integrally constituted within a unity of immanence and transcendence, which makes me what I am. But such integral constitution does not require an act of overcoming a dichotomy and returning to an original union. Such integral constitution is primal to my being. In my reflective experience, I am aware of no movement, act of apprehension or grasping on my part as an independent original being. My conscious activity, does not dis-integrate me from any primal being such that a separate entity is created. Initially, I experience no opposition between my incarnated and individuated self and the other, such that the other is hostile to me, be it a subject or object. However, as I live through moments of time, I do experience differentiation from other subjects or objects. Often what I find desirable is experienced, or brought to my consciousness, as that which satisfies a lack in my self. The phrase often quoted is: "I desire to be desired by the one I desire." What I desire is perceived as apart from my self and has the potential to remain parted from my self. When this is the case I experience existential alienation. Then, to correct this, I consciously seek to conceive of others, subjects or

objects, in such a way that they exist in my conscious experience as co-operatively as possible and in such a way that I realize authentic relationships with them.

Expanding upon the above reflection, I now present five phenomenological philosophical moments, or events. Each is a reflection upon a philosophical existential activity with an eye to the dehellenized future of my personal, but not private, belief. The events I reflect upon are: dehellenization and theological construction; dehellenization and becoming aware of God; dehellenization and believing; dehellenization and remembering and, dehellenization and watching and waiting.

### Dehellenization and Theological Construction

These days I undertake theological construction from within a dehellenized understanding. Dehellenized understanding is not a fixed point of view but a point of view that is perpetually undergoing development and re-constitution. The dehellenization process has helped me to realize that my Christian and secular experience had been for a time identical. I had no need to distinguish between them. It was easy, therefore, for me to think that to be a Christian was co-terminus with living in the secular Western social and cultural order. It took some time for me to truly appreciate that the secular Western social and cultural order is, in fact, the legacy of a Hellenized philosophical tradition. While reading the works of contemporary Western philosophers, I realized that this Hellenized philosophical inheritance was of serious concern to them. Their Hellenized philosophical inheritance appeared to be undergoing a critical process of assessment. However, upon critical examination of their thinking, I made my own discovery that some of them were merely engaged in up-dating traditional ideas and not engaged in a process of dehellenization at all. Realizing that I ceased to follow their lead, I rejected the mere updating of ideas and sought instead a replacement, that is, a truly dehellenized approach to philosophical

contemplation. Encouraged by the Catholic philosophical language at the time of Vatican II, I favor a *ressourcement* over an *aggiornamento*. That is, a return to the sources of philosophical language over a mere updating of philosophical language, designed to conform to modern usage, is to be preferred. In light of Vatican II, I asked what we as philosophers and theologians entering the end of a philosophical age was to be our role in constituting any new understanding between Christian and secular experience. The answer, I realized, was that only a return to the sources of Western philosophical thinking could provide a satisfactory direction for the way ahead.

One effect of this philosophical crisis, that is, the option between *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement*, upon me was that I could not know of it without becoming a different person. The knowledge of it transformed me and that required a philosophical readjustment on my part. As time went on I found this philosophical readjustment to be perpetual. Further, I found it necessary to do something about this readjustment and investigate its historical sources and, also to do something about my self, that is, consider and construct the future of my belief. The cultural and social context in which I live, that is, my environment changes on the basis of the collective experiences of my community. In the contemporary Western context, I have experienced such change occurring slowly. As a result, I discovered that I am among those contemporary Christians calling for change, yet not taken seriously by many of my contemporaries. Or, if I am taken seriously, I am not heeded, because of their philosophical disinterest, which is due to a commitment to their *a priori* belief system retained from a Hellenized philosophical past. Ahead of some of my peers, I soon realized that when answers to my philosophical questions are given beforehand there is no need for me to actively undertake any theological construction. I could remain philosophically passive receiving pre-existing ideas uncritically. I realized also that rather than blame my social or intellectual inheritance constructed on an *a priori*

philosophical understanding I needed to face my own responsibility and become an agent for change within myself and within my environment. Thus, my problem became not just how to correct my past but, more significantly, how to plan for my future free from a Hellenized philosophy. Only through a methodology, not dependent on a Hellenized inheritance, but constituted phenomenologically could I plan for a future that did not duplicate my earlier beliefs.

Through phenomenologically reflecting upon my experience, I have come to understand that Christianity is neither an abstraction, nor an idea. Nor is it an ideology. I have abandoned this understanding. These days I express the essence of my Christian belief phenomenologically through relationships within the existential reality of my community of faith. The faith community in which I live possesses a historical reality not only in the psychological, social, and natural sense, but also in the transcendent, spiritual, and supernatural sense. I must explain this. To believe in the Judeo-Christian revelation given to my community is to believe that my existence is constituted by certain events involving God's activity. Even though I am conscious of God's activity, immanently and transcendentally, in my experience of being and becoming, what I have found more significant, however, is that the original revelation in all these events might have been otherwise than they were. I admit that I was not aware of the implications of the insight, that original revelation could possibly have been otherwise than what it was, until I was exposed to Leslie Dewart's thinking on the same subject.

At this stage of my philosophical development I had not yet managed to formulate a totally satisfactory approach to the integration of Hellenic philosophical concepts into my experience. I think that part of the reason for my lack of success was due to the fact that Hellenic concepts were not merely unsatisfactory in interpreting my experience, but also they were foreign to my experience. In other words, my experience is not Hellenic. The fact is that the philosophical

and theological questions raised within my ordinary experience have little in common with Hellenic philosophical understanding which characterizes an age that no longer exists. Eventually, I recognized that I needed an alternative approach. The question became, in my Christian philosophical understanding, a question of interpreting, in satisfactory and contemporary concepts, my daily experience in the presence of God. The question of satisfactory and contemporary concepts is an existential, not theoretical, question. As I contemplated this new insight it did yield some satisfactory results. One was that the inordinate influence of Hellenic philosophy, particularly on early the twelfth century thought and subsequently on my Christian understanding, was no longer dominant.

In my earlier years I had assumed that society and history, as ideologies, were somehow determined by pre-existing ideas. Today, however, my philosophical contemplation has helped me to realize that society and history, as humanly constituted, are as indeterminable in their constitution as are the persons who make up a society and write its history. Society and history are not fixed ideologies, but are dynamic human social constructions. It is through a dehellenized and phenomenological understanding that I am able to understand society and history as indeterminable to the same degree that humans are indeterminable. This understanding frees me from the necessity of accepting that pre-existing ideas determine my conduct. I do recognize, however, that certain existential constraints determine my choices but necessity is not one of them. Thus, even given the limiting conditions of my environment, I have the power to make it other than it is.

If my theological construction in practical human affairs has any meaning and Christian value for me and my community, it is because I am trying to work out our proper relationships in order to live in responsible freedom. To live in responsible freedom is the freedom for which I have been created. Further, in that freedom, I believe that I am to live in a philosophically contemplative manner, that is, to

respond freely to the supernatural vocation to which God calls me. I try to respond creatively and faithfully, as an individual within the contemporary Western social order and culture, but in a dehellenized manner. I have noticed that when the Hellenic philosophers attempted in their social order and culture something similar they presupposed that philosophical ideas with independent existence composed reality because they accepted that cosmic events depended upon the necessity of fate. On the contrary, I am a believer, not in fate but human freedom. Cosmic events do not depend on fate. When, in human freedom, I contemplate about what I should do if I were to do the right thing in creating my future, I contemplate about what I have to do to bring into existence what does not yet exist or is not yet present in my conscious experience. Having experienced such freedom, I hold that the contemplative life, as a way of being, is primary and preferable to a life of mere cognition.

As a free a morally good social life and a peaceful world are possible for me because such problems of conduct, or ethics, arise out of my consciousness and subjectivity rather than out of any theoretical, objective, or ideological struggle with society or with other individuals. As a free agent I am able to contemplate philosophical issues before acting on them. Thus, I am truly responsible for my conduct. No one else is. There is no group, or individual, that can do away with my moral freedom. Only I can do that. But, in abdicating my moral freedom I would become dehumanized. My present moral decisions arise out of my prior humanitarian freedom. I cannot avoid ruling myself reasonably, humanely, and autonomously. From a moral perspective, I do not do as Plato and Aristotle did, that is, attempt to conform to a preconceived order to reality. In short, through my philosophical contemplation I have come to realize that I theologically construct my future of belief as an incardinated, individuated and dehellenized human being.

## Dehellenization and Becoming Aware of God

I understand my experience of God at my present level of awareness reached by a developing maturity in my thinking. Ultimately, because of my acceptance of the dehellenization of philosophical contemplation, I must now live with an awareness of the divergent notions of the God of Christian belief. Further, the divergent notions of the God of Christian belief suggest to me alternative methodologies for understanding. One such alternative has been to understand, from a subjective point of view, that my self-fulfillment as a human being is intrinsically connected to my self-realization. What I make myself to be, as a knowing subject, places me in an essential relation to God. Purposiveness, which I distinguish from purpose, is my existential role as determined intentionally and subjectively. Purposiveness constitutes my internal seeking creatively to be. On the other hand, purpose is my goal in life as determined externally and objectively. I do not seek, as a purpose for being, the classical Hellenic philosophical goal of happiness. Rather, I seek purposively to be creative and thus becoming fulfilled in God's presence. Thus, in my self-constitution I seek to be in the presence of God creatively with God's self-communication to me.

Among the first beliefs that I recall rejecting in the evolution of my philosophical contemplation was the illusion that the illusion does not exist. That is, the illusion that reality must be conceived as being, or reality is not conceivable at all, I have rejected. Having rejected the notion that reality is restricted to being, I no longer needed to equate, as the Hellenists did, intelligibility and necessity. Intelligibility and necessity are predicates or attributes of the Hellenic concept of being, not of reality. My belief in the evolution of being and becoming, conceived as presence within reality, precludes equating intelligibility and necessity. For intelligibility and necessity to be equated requires the adoption of a non-evolutionary Hellenic

philosophical idealistic perspective. I have found this perspective to be incompatible with my experience.

The reconciliation of my belief in God, within my everyday experience, requires the dehellenization of Christian dogmatic and doctrinal concepts. Dehellenization includes the process of my self-conscious rejection of a philosophical point of view, no longer valid, which had been formally realized within the culture I inherited. Such rejection is required in order to permit a new methodology, that is, an authentic scientific, but not technological, methodology for philosophical contemplation within a phenomenological point of view. In other words, dehellenization is an activity of my self-conscious creation of the future of my belief through rejection of a present unsatisfactory inheritance and the subsequent acceptance of an authentic scientific replacement. Phenomenology is that authentic scientific replacement as introduced by Edmund Husserl. Of Husserl's phenomenology as scientific, Quentin Lauer writes: "It is a 'science' because it affords a knowledge that has effectively disposed of all the elements that could render its grasp 'contingent'." <sup>29</sup> My conscious creation of belief takes place within my community, which presumably is striving for a common self-conscious creation of the future of belief. Within my community my experience is that I live in an environment that has been created by a multitude of persons. Hence, characterized by a pluralist interpretation of experience, I encounter unity, not uniformity, in my community. Even though I cannot stop the future pluralist development of my environment, I can be involved in its transformation as it is taking place. Such transformation, in fact, impinges upon my consciousness and compels me to re-think my self-constituted life. This re-thinking is a perpetual process. As a result, growth in my Christian theism is self-consciously perpetual, its traditional form being replaced by a contemporary form appropriate to my experience and my culture. Thus, any experience of my awareness and cultural interpretation, as come of age, is also an experience of God come of age.



As a theist I consciously live out of the essence, but not necessarily out of the existence, of my faith. That is, orthodox belief, rather than tradition, constitutes my life. However, this conscious living out of the essence of my faith requires an existential response to a transcendence revealed within my consciousness through a process of differentiation. As a result of this process of differentiation I cannot believe in God once and for all any more than I can exist once and for all. Both are a perpetual process. Nor, without being idolatrous, can I now believe in anything, or anyone else, in the same way in which I believe in God. Interestingly, it was only later in my contemplative philosophical life that I became aware that Christianity is the only religion to generate an attitude of atheism.

My self-awareness occurs within the experience of my particular religion, that is, the Christian religion. My self-awareness is a property of my human nature. I am aware that I have a personal history, which distinguishes me from other living creatures and their personal histories. Various philosophical traditions from early Hellenic times to modern times have suggested that humans are merely thinking animals. Yet, I find that in my understanding I exhibit a peculiar and unique ability that not all other living creatures, that is, animals, necessarily share. Further, I am a being who is capable of understanding myself to be present to myself. Being present to myself is my consciousness. The real difference between other conscious animals and me is not that I possess a higher degree of knowledge. The real difference between other animals and me is that I am able to act self-reflectively in a humanitarian manner.

My human development, in a philosophical sense, takes the form of an increase in awareness. This increase in awareness is a basic characteristic that ultimately reveals my capacity for transcendence. What is unique and distinctive about my transcendental development, when compared to my temporal development, is that my transcendental development takes the form of a qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, experience. Yet, I recognize my existential

development as occurring within a quantitative temporal experience. That is, an experience in time. My transcendental awareness develops qualitatively, that is, essentially, as I become aware of that which I am, in some manner, already conscious. In fact, transcendental awareness is an awareness of reality outside time. In heightening my transcendental awareness, I render concrete that which had been present to me all the time and which I now recognize in a new light. Thus, through transcendental awareness I see a sharper, clearer, and nobler meaning. Such a meaning is essential meaning. This new essential meaning of which I have become conscious is not of another independent meaning of which I am now conscious. Rather, this new essential meaning has emerged from, or evolved out of, the earlier meaning that I had incorporated into my life. This new essential meaning is now an expanded experience of the present. Thus, in heightening my awareness, I realize a nobler transcendental consciousness, which in turn, creates a further genuine development in my consciousness. In short, I experience my present transcendental consciousness as evolving in relation to my experience and being meaningful only in relation to my experience.

My experience, common in Western traditional understanding, has been that to know a thing better means to know more about the same thing. That is, knowledge has been conceived quantitatively, not qualitatively. This understanding became problematic when I understood that the closing of revelation, after the end of the New Testament era, meant that my Christian faith could not reach any new truths. The catechism teaches that the Trinity and Incarnation were revealed within the Christian faith in relation to Judaism. Thus, once I perceived my Christian faith as complete I realized that it could only increase through the multiplication of concepts about the faith that I already knew. However, this understanding did not reflect my experience. I did not experience God's self-revelation in Jesus as nothing but a variation of a closed theme within revelation. I have no experience of being restricted to

knowing only the historical record of a revelation that occurred in the past and that has been completed in the past. Rather, I experience living in an open-ended revealing presence of God whose transcendental presence is made concrete in my daily Christian life.

I am not satisfied, philosophically, with any conscious attempts at reunion with some form of being from which I was originally separated. However, I am satisfied with my conscious and continual attempts at self-differentiation out of that being with which I am originally continuous and with whom I share unity, but not union. My self-differentiation out of that being is an active process whereby my unique identity emerges and is present to others as well as myself. Thus, my identity is not the becoming of my being. Rather, my identity constitutes my being and becoming simultaneously and abides in time and is distinguishable from others within time. In other words, I conceive my identity as the differentiation, within my consciousness, of my being from other beings. In this conscious differentiation, I experience no true difference between my identity and self-identity since they are co-temporal with my self-conscious awareness.

I understand truth not to result from my efforts at representation of an object. Rather, I understand truth as the moral value of my relationships when relating existentially to others as subjects or objects. Truth is that moral value that emerges from the differentiation process of my self-constitution and my coming-into-unique-being. Unlike the Hellenic conception, truth, as a phenomenological moral value, can only be expressed as fidelity within relationships. Thus, in the phenomenological and essential approach that I have adopted truth cannot be expressed as conformity within my relationships. Conformity in relationships is the classical stance that I have rejected. That stance would require me to relate to others by reason of their nature, objectively understood. That is, I would have to conform to others due to external norms. Fidelity, on the other hand, requires me to relate to others by reason of my own nature, subjectively

understood. In being faithful within my relationships I become what I am for others due to internal norms. As Shakespeare put it, "To thine own self be true."<sup>30</sup> In short, conformity, like law, obligates from the outside, or without. Fidelity, like nobility, obliges from the inside, or within.

I have accepted as historically accurate that Hellenization of Christianity was a gradual transformation of earlier cultural forms into later ones. Hellenism is not the cultural form of the world today. It was, however, the cultural form of the ecumenical world of the apostolic and patristic ages. Throughout the apostolic and patristic ages, it was practically impossible to distinguish between the universalization and the Hellenization of Christianity. In the Hellenist philosophical view God is a transcendent being, vis à vis others, in contrast to the Hebraic philosophical view in which God is a presence to one among others. Within my phenomenological understanding, God is that reality, other than being, who is present to being. Further, God is that reality that makes my being "to be." Thus, my unique life is a differentiated, or individuated, coming-into-being being manifested in relation to God, who is present to me.

I have come to realize that I am, as a self-identified subject, a center of consciousness. Without being guilty of objectivism, I am an entity who can objectify my self. I am that which can objectively signify my self to my self. In the early stages of my personal philosophical development, due to the influence of a modified Greek metaphysical thinking, I had accepted that there was a concrete separation or dichotomy between essence and existence. I have now accepted another understanding, based on my experience, which does not accord with that Hellenistic understanding.

As an existential thinker, my belief bears directly upon the experience of the reality God and not upon words or upon concepts about God. God is immediately revealed. That is to say, I apprehend God's revelation directly. My experience is that my consciousness bears directly upon the reality of God. Thus, my knowledge of God does not result

in a perceptual union of me, as a subjective knower, and the object that I know, that is, God. Rather, my knowledge of God is constituted through my differentiation and individuation within that reality, God. Hence, I do not experience God in terms of an essence within existence. Rather, I experience God through a differentiation within reality, as a process of emerging individuation, both transcendent and immanent, beyond being and existence with no predetermined history. Since differentiation is a phenomenologically conceived process in which my existence means that, in order for me to be, I must consciously create my self, that is, differentiate my self within God's reality.

I concur with the existentialist philosophers Gabriel Marcel and Nicolas Berdyaev and do not conceive my being as polarized into existence and essence. My existence and essence are co-terminus with, but differentiated from, my real presence which is a phenomenological, not ideological, presence. I reject any a priori philosophical understanding that posits a dichotomy between essence and existence in constituting my individuated existence. Since I accept that things need not exist necessarily; they could be other than what they presently are. Also, I accept that to exist and to be present are different understandings. Reality, which is beyond the physical, is revealed to me as present within the process of my differentiation. In fact, there is, beyond the physical, present to me a reality of which I am conscious, that when felt by me, constitutes me more fully than I would be, were I not exposed to its influence. I experience my constitution as true holistic consciousness. I am conscious that I am more than the sum of my parts. A holistic consciousness does not burden me with having to prove that there is actually a God. Rather, in my contemplative philosophy, I am concerned with disclosing how the reality of God is present to my consciousness. My concern is the presence and reality of God, not God's existence. In a holistic conscious experience what is revealed to me, since it is not obvious, is God's presence, not God's existence.

Further, this real presence of God is not that of Greek metaphysics.

My self, my individuated personality, is that which is conscious; is that which can signify my self to my self. For me to be a subject, that is a person, is to be known to myself in God's presence. My personality is a manifestation of my unique self at my present stage of development. Further, my consciousness is what constitutes my humanity. I experience my self as an entity who desires to go beyond its existential self. If I, as a Christian, look at the world and understand nature through Hellenic eyes, I will find it necessary to assert the omnipotence of God over and against me. On the contrary, I am conscious that God does not have power over me in that sense.

I am conscious, as well, that the fundamental relationship that exists between my self and God renders us present to each other in the act of constituting the world, that is, our environment, our communion. This, I believe, is true insight for all human subjects.

In my daily life, as I dehellenize my Christian belief, I recast the meaning of faith in terms that do not imply God's ascendancy over me. With the acceptance of Hellenic philosophy, I had accepted a spilt within the previously unified relationship of God and me. In accepting Hellenistic philosophy, I had perceived being, as logically prior to becoming. In my current dehellenized life the perception of a supernatural, transcendental being is not an intrinsic part of my Christian faith. What is now absolutely fundamental to my Christian faith is the consciousness of God's immanent grace, that is, God's presence in me as a true gift (donum) of God.

As contemporary Western philosophy departs more and more from its Hellenic presuppositions, the concept of classical supernaturalism loses its usefulness for my Christian belief. I experience this loss on a daily basis. However, to this day, the mainstream of Catholic philosophy has remained scholastic and hence somewhat unsympathetic to my contemporary understanding of a new

humanity. In the alternative view to scholasticism, which I have come to accept, grace is not opposed to my human nature but my human nature receives grace because that is how I, as human, have been constituted. In my human nature I am existentially, not metaphysically, related to grace. In short, grace is my existential awareness of the reality of God's presence to me.

### Dehellenization and Believing

Concerning belief, the question that I have asked myself is: Do I consciously undertake to critically construct the future of my personal belief, or do I choose to remain satisfied with my pre-critical understanding? This is the question I now address. Today, in my present philosophical contemplation I consider issues from a meta-metaphysical perspective. That is, having rejected traditional Hellenistic understanding in preference to a phenomenological philosophical understanding, I have transcended the merely metaphysical in my contemplation. In a phenomenological philosophical understanding, the real problem becomes not whether the world will change or whether it will remain the same. The real problem is whether the world will change of its own accord, without my participation, or whether it will be changed deliberately, consciously and with my participation.

I contemplate what has presented itself as knowledge to my consciousness in phenomenal existential relationships. These are phenomenological existential relationships which define the limits of my philosophical consciousness in relation to reality. Further, actualized knowledge, or my Christian belief, lies beyond the foundations of a Hellenized Hebraism. Nor does it lie in a pre-Hellenized Hebraism.

While there is no possibility to return to the past, the shaping of my future of belief does require an analysis of the past without re-living it. In analyzing the past I am conscious of myself, not as having been a static being, but as having been an active free agent in the presence of other

active free agents and God, who also is a free agent. In constructing the future of my Christian belief I have not chosen a traditional philosophical basis, nor any foundation provided by an up-dated traditional understanding. Rather, I have chosen to look to the future and actualize my self in the present as an agent effecting change.

In my philosophical musings I have made the same discovery as philosophers before me. That is, I discovered the activity of relating my self to reality and, that my relation to reality is a self-relation. It was only after I had learned to define myself in terms of consciousness that I came to appreciate the logic of the process by which I had become conscious of this self-relation. The proper philosophical relation to reality is that of contemplation as Plato and Aristotle recognized. To be conscious of reality is not to interact with it as if it were one of many objects. Reality is not susceptible to objectification in itself. To assume that every entity is objectively constituted as a self-contained necessity is to reject the possibility of dynamic activity and remain within a static Hellenist mind-set. Rather, to be conscious of reality is to behold it, to reflect upon it inwardly and to recognize it as it is in itself, that is, in its essence. I know reality not through conversing with it, nor by engaging it on a not-me basis as it follows its own necessary course. But, I am conscious of reality through various phenomena present to me.

Classical epistemological thought begins with the dichotomous juxtaposition of self and non-self, subject and object, mind and being. In classical thought, the mind itself belongs to the category of being. In my earliest contemplation, I believed that my mind and my being confront each other as I distinguished one from the other. My experience was that in being aware of the other I overcame its otherness. I comprehended the other despite its separation from me and was truly conscious of it. The overcoming of this separation is what I had traditionally accepted as knowledge. To know was, therefore, for my mind to pass from separation to a type of union with the



other. According to St Thomas's explanation such union takes place within the knower such that a cognitive power brings about the unification of the knower to the known. But this is not so in all cases. That is, the two do not become one, or unified, with the exception that when the known, itself, is a knower.<sup>31</sup> The question arises, then, whether the cause of this assumed unification of the knower and known refers to something in the knowing subject or something in the being that is known.<sup>32</sup> This describes the dichotomous approach that I have rejected.

I hold knowledge not to be constituted by the classical overcoming of a dichotomy, but to be constituted by a relational fidelity of the knower to the known. Insofar as I know another subject, I am the known. Thus, the unity affected by my knowledge is not a joining of two parts; it is not a union, but a relational unification, constituted in the relationship between the knower, that is me, and the known, that is, the other. In actualizing, or recognizing this unity through the process of differentiation, I have the benefit of language, not just mere communication, to express my experience. To my mind, language is a function of actualization rather than the signification of what has been actualized.

To the degree that I do anything unconsciously, I do it uncritically, and to the degree I do anything uncritically, I impede my freedom by restricting the possibilities of belief that could open to me in the future. Dehellenization permits my future conscious creation of the possibilities of belief in a world, which does not yet exist, based on the experience of the one that does exist. In short, my new world of belief arises from within my old world, not from a location outside of my old world. In my understanding, then, when I create a new world it is tantamount to transcending the past old world. As a general rule, the culture in which I live is abandoning the religion that brought it into being. Thus, as a religious person, I experience that I am often estranged from the religion I inherited. However, I have found it useful understand how this estrangement occurred so that I may

overcome its effects. In undertaking a phenomenological approach to understanding I have reached a level of self-consciousness and self-creativity that views existential dichotomy as a philosophical error not to be repeated in the conscious creation of the future of my belief.

My consciousness is self-presentative. That is, it presents my self both to the world of being and, it presents my self to my self as part of the world of becoming. My consciousness being continually heightened differentiates and abstracts within the world of becoming in which I grow as a person. My consciousness is also heightened as it differentiates my self from that which is not my self. I am a self whose subjectivity is disclosed when I differentiate my self from others. Thus, I am among those entities, which come into being, and among those entities whose existence emerges through self-differentiation. In this self-differentiation I am contingent because I make myself to be in my context, that is, I create myself. The ultimate achievement of my consciousness is my self-possession. I have meaning, as a becoming being, as relative to myself. Further, I do not make my self out of a void. I experience pre-determined categories from which I create my meaning whether such categories are pre-determined by the nature of the mind, as Kant thought, or by the nature of being, as the pre-Kantian philosophers thought. The truth or error of my understanding depends on the relationship between me, as subject, and the other, as object, and not on the correct apprehension of the object by me as a knowing subject. I do not find solutions to my existential dilemmas in past philosophies but, rather, in a present phenomenological awareness influenced by the nature of my mind.

When I assert my existence, it is not merely as an affirmation of a unique and isolated individual. When I assert my existence, it is the proof of the contingency of my being. That is, my existence is a contingency dependent on a community and God, or better, God's revelation to my community. The dehellenization of my Christian belief does not mean the rejection of my previous Hellenic philosophy

the substitution of another more appropriate philosophy of contingency. The term dehellenization is not simply a negative, that is, it is not un-hellenization, but dehellenization. In strictly positive terms I experience dehellenization as the conscious creation of the future of my belief. Arising from my experience there are three points to be understood in the conscious creation of the future of my belief. The first is that knowledge cannot be made purposeful.<sup>33</sup>

Dare I say that evolution and purposiveness constitute the historical development of my thinking? Within my intellectual history I have come to understand that the task to which philosophy calls me is not the dismantling and reconstruction of metaphysics, but rather the transcending of metaphysics. Further, my task is not only that of transcending specific Hellenistic metaphysics. Hellenistic metaphysics is but one form of metaphysical philosophy to be transcended. My task is, in fact, the transcending of all metaphysics in order to encounter reality. That includes the transcending of any phenomenological ontology as well. In my current philosophical contemplation, I am at a new stage of dehellenization, that is, a non-Hellenistic, but essential, scientific stage.

It is understandable that St Thomas thought that the scholastic way of thinking was the only methodological way of thinking given his context. However, I am conscious of the fact that there is no necessary methodology for me to relate myself to reality; as well, that no methodology of relating to reality is natural or privileged. My world is now one of increasing personal responsibility and my problem is one of finding an appropriate intellectual and philosophical methodology through which I may respond to the meanings arising out of my experience of both the old and new worlds. A phenomenological methodology has the advantage that it incorporates my entire person through my senses, emotions, intellect, and will in the act of knowing. As a consequence, I am conscious that my contingent human experience is insufficient. I may overcome this

insufficiency, however, via a conscious holistic understanding. When I incorporate my conscious holistic experience as an act of faith this equates to nothing less than my quest for meaning. It is my faith that seeks understanding.

But the problem for me, in light of the future, is that it is not easy to give a concrete shape to the final project of my life. Since I live in community, must I suppose that the concrete form of my project be the same for every one? The answer is no. Although I am conscious that there is in my life a creative freedom, which is itself subject to development throughout my life; I must not presume that this is the same for other human subjects. They will have their unique experience and outcome of their creative freedom. In my present understanding, I realize that the outcome of my freedom is not as definable from the beginning as I once thought. Nor is it predetermined. I consciously and freely create the future of my belief in the context of theological faith, hope and love contemplated holistically.

#### Dehellenization and Remembering

Western Christianity has historically relied upon Hellenistic metaphysics in forming a philosophical understanding of the nature and attributes of God. However, this is changing. Human evolution has deeply influenced religion in general and belief in God in particular. Generally, I find that I am first conscious of what I do to nature before I am conscious of what nature does to me. The capacity to be conscious of what nature is doing to me is a capacity that comes with maturity. Thus, I need to create a philosophy that will be suitable to my increasingly mature theological activity in giving proper expression to my understanding of God's influence upon me as a subject. My religious crisis, then, has to do with the epistemological and metaphysical questions, which underlie my Christian theology and belief. In short, my religious crisis is philosophical.

I have remarked earlier that I use language to express what I have understood in my mind. From that understanding arises my philosophical need for education rather than information. Such education requires a re-conceptualized understanding of the relationship to my community and the world as I experience them. I need to re-conceptualize myself, my place in my community and in the world. Since reality is disclosed within the mind that apprehends it, my mind is simultaneously a constituent of any reality that I can know. In this process of re-conceptualization, or education, strictly speaking what I am conscious of are not phenomena that manifest themselves, but the essence of reality, which manifests itself phenomenologically.

Being conscious of the essence of reality does not construct a dichotomy between my thought and speech. And yet any dichotomy that I do recognize, or remember from my previous contemplation, is a fictional dichotomy. I am conscious that in expressing my relationship to reality I use language as a personal, but not private, creation of my understanding. When I think or talk about the world, that is, my environment, I create an essential relationship to it. In this relationship I do not merely relate to the world, or my environment, but I self-relate, to the world and my environment. In my thinking I become related to the world, or my environment, as a self, that is, as a subject that is not only related to the world but knows of its relations to the world. This is dehellenized remembering, which is a perpetual activity that I undertake.

What I achieve in my language and thought is the creation of my self in relation to my environment. The activity I undertake has happened and is happening to me. In other words, I need to abide by my experience recollection of which resides in my conscious memory. This, however, does not mean that I extract truth from my experience and present it through a process of a mental duplication. Even though the essential insight may be the same for every philosopher the remembering is not necessarily the same for

all philosophers. Remembering is that quality of education which accounts for the fact that the more I actually know the more I potentially know. Thus, when I remember I enlarge the horizon of my consciousness. That means that were I to insist upon any pre-given conceptual and cultural form of religious remembering it would prevent the enlargement of my conscious horizon. This would be prejudicial to me since this pre-given form of religious remembering would then obscure the meaning, which it once revealed. My personal and individuated meaning is not to be found in the remembering of my experience, but rather, is to be found in my conscious interpretation of my experience. Thus, in my conscious interpretation I employ language to create my selfhood as well as illustrate the world's and my environment's objectivity.

My experience is that my memory is not the objective recollection or duplication of my previous experience because my previous experience was not necessary, but contingent. Phenomenological recollection, or apperception, is a subjective activity. Recollection, as objective memory, is the approach characteristic of Hellenist thinking. That is to say, recollection as objective memory, results from an inner constitutive principle of experience that is intelligible independently of me as subject. Phenomenologically, intelligibility, or the inner constitutive principle, is to be found in my relations to things, not in the things themselves. This means that my intelligibility, my inner constitutive principle, is not to be found in my individual substance, but in my temporal and historical presence reflected in the relationships by which I live out of the past in light of the future. Through my relationships I am emerging from the world of being in which I presently exist. By virtue of my consciousness I differentiate myself from the world of objective being. I cannot be an entity who is nothing but an object, even if I am an object who thinks. I am a subject and as subject, I am what an object never is, that is, conscious. In my emergence into the future I situate my self in my new world and create my self within my relations to reality. My

relationships within reality are constituted by my self-creative activity in which I differentiate my self from a world of objects from which I was originally indistinct.

My mind, or consciousness, perpetually develops. One of the consequences of this development is the heightening awareness of my conscious understanding. When I accept that revelation is a communication to me, or others, that acceptance implies that my consciousness is essentially involved in it. My language interpreting revelation is human even though the truth of revelation may be beyond me. Even so revelation is, I hold, proper to me and other human subjects due to our capacity for language. I have no reason to believe in a brute animal equivalent of revelation or human language. I have come to the conclusion that my language must be recast in order to make allowance for my greater awareness of my own consciousness. Since my consciousness is a means of communication of my self to my self and, since my capacity for consciousness has increased, I am able to participate more consciously and deliberately in my own self-fashioning today than in the past.

I understand my faith as a self-disposition, which renders my experience meaningful and worthwhile. Thus, my Christian faith is able to support religious meaning and value within a variety of alternative forms of understanding. My problem is not how to defend the traditional concept of God in my secular experience but how to take advantage of the growth in my understanding in order to create the most satisfactory form of interpretation of God. Thus, I cannot remain within a Hellenist understanding with respect to my belief in God. As I have mentioned, to the Hellenist mind necessity is an intrinsic characteristic of the cosmos as whole. The Hellenist future, therefore, which included the gods, is nothing but a remembered ideal past.

I exist as a member of humanity. And humanity is more than the numerical totality of individuals existing on the surface of the earth. Humanity, as a holistic concept, is also the historical reality of generations having succeeded

generations. Given my human freedom, my creation of a future life-style may well take place without, and possibly against, God. In my temporal existence I can create the sort of life-style in which there is no room for God and, as well, dispense with a morality that normally would transcend me. I know that unlike the Hellenist gods, the Hebrew God, Yahweh, did not only create nature but is also present to nature. The Hebraic Kingdom of God, or heaven, not the Hellenist one, is the outcome of history when history is co-created by Yahweh and me, and like-minded believers. I, as a member of humanity, have the capacity for moral choice. My moral choice is not restricted to the equitable disposition of material goods. My moral choices are not merely ethical choices. Thus, a proper question is whether it is morally permissible for me to change the world, remembering its history as a co-created past, in such a way that moral dilemmas of the past do not arise in the future.

#### Dehellenization and Watching and Waiting

Very few of the observations and concepts I am contemplating in this investigation are original. The fact is that most are not even new. What I am trying to accomplish here is the sort of task that philosophers have always undertaken. That is, to begin to arrange my ideas into a single and insightful mosaic of a personal, but not private, comprehensive and unconventional synthesis. My philosophic explanation of this synthesis is dependent on the stimulus of some sort that either influenced my consciousness from within or from without. In response to this stimulus I have acted internally and have acted to create a new form of consciousness. In short, I have rejected what I experienced to be an inadequate scholastic philosophy and have constituted, in its place, a new scientific methodology for the creation of the future of my belief.

By virtue of my historical memory, that is, my “that was then; this is now” consciousness, I possess an evolutionary understanding of the world that was not available to the



Hellenists. However, there is nothing in this evolutionary understanding of mine that restricts its usefulness to philosophy. This evolutionary understanding is a defining characteristic of my life. I re-create myself by adjusting to my environment through a phenomenological philosophy that depends upon scientific understanding. It is characteristic of brute animal life that adjustment by the creature to its world is mediated through its senses. Unlike the brute animal, however, I adjust by relating myself to a world that I perceive essentially real. As well, I relate to myself, whom I perceive to be an essentially real self. Further, I relate to other such selves, whom I perceive as beings who are in the process of becoming and who perceive themselves as selves and me as a self.

I am not the centre of the universe but I do experience myself as part of the contemporary technological, historical and environmental universe. Thus, I am a participant in life. Nor am I at the centre of life. Classical Hellenist philosophies were created in response to different problems and within a different world. Thus, they reflect differing aspects of the human condition. Contemporary existential philosophy, to which I subscribe, constitutes a co-creative evolution of being and becoming. To my mind, co-creative evolution consists in global phenomena. Within co-creative evolution, in each new point of view, or new level of consciousness, I transcend my previous position. In this process I note that there is nothing in the universe that tells me that it is organized to satisfy or fulfill my needs or preferences. I have no experience that any order and harmony of the universe is intended for my sake as a human being. Rather, as a co-creator in the universe, I structure the order and harmony of the universe. Phenomenological philosophy discloses that there cannot be another parallel, alternative, or distinct world. There is only the one in which I now live. It is in this world that I co-create, through a process of differentiation, my existential being.

## PART TWO

### CONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: THE CONTRIBUTION OF GEORGE TYRRELL (1861-1909)

This section, like Section IV, is a case study, as it were, of the construction, or re-construction, of Christian theology. These two case studies are deliberately poles apart to illustrate that phenomenal theological construction transcends time and yet are united by a common problem. This is not an unusual approach. Kristina Stöckl made the same decision for her research. She chose the least similar poles in a post-totalitarian Eastern Orthodox philosophical discourse because they are related by the problematic they face.<sup>34</sup>

Within his studies, George Tyrrell has correctly noted that Christians in the early Church looked intellectually to the Gentile nations to find philosophical vessels to hold the spiritual treasures they could not find in the house of their spiritual birth. Through their engagement with diverse cultures the early Christians discovered a variety of contexts through which they could express the development of their interior and spiritual life and subsequent theological construction.<sup>35</sup> One context that has provided an intellectual forum, and continues to provide a philosophical forum to express the development of theological construction is found in the Roman Catholic experience of the so-called Modernist Movement of the early 20th century. This movement challenged scholasticism as the dominant theological method for Western theologians. During the early 20th century, the Magisterium of the Roman Church was exceptionally vigilant over initiatives within the Church to open its doors to the worlds of science, philosophy, and democracy. Such vigilance was the result of a suspicion of the historical-critical method of scriptural interpretation. Ironically, Ellen Leonard notes that Maude Petre saw the intent of the Modernists as “fighting to make the churches safe for democracy, rather

than undermine them.”<sup>36</sup> The Magisterium in George Tyrrell’s time reluctantly embraced anything that smacked of existential subjectivity. With the publication by Pius X of *Lamentabili* in 1907, as well as, the anti-modernist encyclical *Pascendi* published in 1907, the Roman Catholic Magisterium self-consciously, and with full intention, withdrew from participation in the philosophical debates developing outside post-reformation medieval culture. This withdrawal led to the continuing misperception that the Catholic Church was a monolithic fortress constituting a single public discourse for all her peoples, at all times, and thereby excluding any diversity.

In spite of this withdrawal, the Church’s conservation of tradition is instructive for us today as we reflect on constructing Christian theology, individually and collectively. For example, as Christianity spread during the Patristic period, diverse views developed regarding both the manner and extent to which Hellenistic thinking should be used to interpret the revelation of the Christ in Jesus of Nazareth. Some early thinkers, such as Tertullian (160—225 CE) and Tatian (120—173 CE) were passionately opposed to Hellenistic philosophy and culture for fear that its influence would adulterate the gospel. Others, such as Justin Martyr (112—165 CE) and Clement of Alexandria (150—212 CE) endeavoured to express the message of the gospel using Hellenistic philosophical concepts.<sup>37</sup> And notwithstanding Tertullian’s protestation, “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” Hellenistic philosophy entered the service of the Church. Henceforth, Christian philosophy, as the former Hellenistic and pagan way of thinking of Aristotle and Plato, became an *ancillae theologiae* for Christian theologians. The use of notions borrowed from traditions outside of Christianity’s own traditions, as George Tyrrell has noted, has always been a living part of the Christian *traditio* although not without controversy. Indeed, S. C. Carpenter has suggested that borrowing from outside the Catholic tradition is a trait of the Modernist theologian. Tyrrell, and those who with him

were the original Modernists, were theological re-constructors, but they re-constructed theology in continuity with the ancient Church. However, despite their efforts the Aristotelianism of the Schoolmen and the pedagogical methods of the Friars, were not able to hold together the ancient faith within its legitimate historical development. Thus, historical criticism contributed to the break down the old order. But George Tyrrell and even Alfred Loisy, for a long time, were profoundly Catholic in intention and desire in attempting to up-date the faith.<sup>38</sup> Since the Second Vatican Council (1962—1965), the positive results of a critical scholarship, particularly within scripture study, due to Modernist thinking are apparent.<sup>39</sup> The modern trend in theology away from a singular scholastic approach and towards a diversified approach continues to develop and is fully in keeping with the Catholic Christian approach established at Vatican II.

The diverse theological perspectives introduced through the Modernist theologians are, in fact, foundational to contemporary existential reflection on the construction of Christian theology in the life of the Christian. The hope for such critical reflection and diverse scholarship that is currently underway had been George Tyrrell's desire according Maude Petre. Introducing one of his books she says: "Hence I have not feared to put in fragments, in spite of their lack of finish, for the sake of some flash of insight which they convey; and they will serve their purpose if they do what their author was always satisfied to do, namely to give the lead to some other mind which can carry the search a little further."<sup>40</sup> Tyrrell, although not a politician, struggled with religion as a social way of life. He had this in common with William Gladstone. Tyrrell viewed theology as a partial interpretation of one's social, and therefore, political life. He entered the Roman Catholic Church in 1879 and a year later he joined the Jesuits, the Society of Jesus. He was sympathetic to the difficulties experienced by Catholics in trying to reconcile scientific knowledge and thought with the traditional elements in

Roman Catholicism. He did distrust the science of his day. He “believed that the supernatural realities of faith should be defended by other means than those of rationalistic science. It was in fact, for him, the scientific pretensions of theology that were unjustifiable.”<sup>41</sup> Maude Petre and others have described his writings as having an apologetic intention, being meditative in approach, and somewhat mystical in content.<sup>42</sup> Tyrrell did not write for the uncritical thinker, but rather wrote as one who was in communion with his readers and their sensibilities. He was a cautious writer and did not write for the sake of novelty or popularity. He has noted that to depart from established conventions for merely selfish motives is licence, not liberty.<sup>43</sup>

That Greek thought may have saved the Christian message for the world was not part of Tyrrell’s understanding. Rather, he suggested that human intention, schooled in the Christian life, has preserved the Christian message. He writes that he sees intention guiding the process of preservation from first to last as leaven in the loaf.<sup>44</sup> Scholasticism, as a way of thinking, that accommodates revelation to secular form had little appeal to Tyrrell’s mind. The issue, for him, was how to recognise theology among the contemporary forms of order that serve the faithful seeking existential understanding. As a form of order, theology serves an institutional Christianity. For Tyrrell, the *vox populi* as a source for theological thinking does not equate to the voice of the populace, that is, to public opinion. Rather, the *vox populi* consists of a collection of the best results of the thinking of the collective mind of the faithful. The *vox populi* is, in this sense, the *sensus fidelium* as reflected within the construction of Christian theology. Most discussions and philosophical treatments of Tyrrell’s theology occur within the historical context of the Modernist Crisis in the Catholic Church. However, David Schultenover proposes a variant approach to understanding Tyrrell’s theology. He claims that Tyrrell’s literary genre is intellectual history,

rather than institutional history. His study does not aim at describing the modernist movement but, rather, describing the intellectual development of a major contributor to the movement by focusing on the person as the key to his thought.<sup>45</sup>

Tyrrell lived at a time when religion seemed destined to be undermined by the vast amount of secular knowledge that was sweeping over the intellectual world.<sup>46</sup>

The explosion of secular knowledge threatened to discount the intellectual and meditative approach to religious experience and theological interpretation. It also constituted a threat to the Catholic intellectual life of the British Isles and the Continent. For this reason, Mary Green suggests that in Tyrrell's day Catholic religious thought had not kept pace with English religious thought in general nor with the Catholic and the general religious thought on the Continent.<sup>47</sup> In short, Catholic theological thinking still lagged behind the advanced theological thought of the Reformation. David Wells notes that Tyrrell displayed in his writings an Irish heart but he possessed a German mind thus characterising him as straddling the Irish affective and the German intellectual worlds.<sup>48</sup>

Concerning Germanic influence in English thought, shortly before Tyrrell's time, Joseph Gostwick correctly observed that German intellectual, meditative thinking could never be the result of knowledge founded on reason alone. Germanic intellectual thinking, characterised by intuition and immediate feeling, influenced the construction of Christian theology. Religious feeling was beginning to be taken seriously at this time and Gostwick observed that the "rights" of intuition and immediate feeling; rights long suppressed under the tyranny of logic according to him, were now allowed to be as valid as the conclusions of that reasoning process.<sup>49</sup> Such intuitive and immediate feeling nourished the intellectually meditative character of Tyrrell's theology.

Initially, scholasticism provided the context for Tyrrell's thinking. However, Tyrrell soon realized that

scholasticism no longer met the needs of a modern age. In Leslie Lilley's words, Tyrrell could no longer accept a demonstration of God supported by those "idols of the tribe," that is, the Aristotelian conceptions of motion, causality, contingency, and finality.<sup>50</sup> Bernard Reardon suggests that some knowledge of Hegel's philosophy, which rejected Aristotelian understanding, would help in comprehending the pattern of Tyrrell's thinking.<sup>51</sup> Further, Percy Gardner interprets Tyrrell's note that the process through which he, Tyrrell, had reached his present position will appear as a wavering, rather than as a straight line, a result that would facilitate his critic's task, as indicating the Hegelian dialectic.<sup>52</sup>

A contemporary of Tyrrell, A. Boutwood, writing under the pseudonym Hakluyt Egerton, alludes to the meditative aspect of Tyrrell's thinking.<sup>53</sup> When Tyrrell speaks of "Divine Immanence," Egerton does not believe that Tyrrell means Pantheism, the doctrine that God is the substance of all finite things. Egerton wrote that, undoubtedly, Tyrrell believed that God is in man. But, by way of mere indwelling or as a part of man's composite nature is not clear.<sup>54</sup> Egerton also noted that Tyrrell distinguished between the general experience of religion and the particular experience of revelation. Tyrrell did not refer to the cause of revelation, as if it were the same as the cause of religion, but referred to revelation by a description of its subjective character, as a psychological event.<sup>55</sup> This subjective insight, or psychological occurrence, is common to those reflecting upon the construction of Christian theology through an existential approach.

The existential issues that Tyrrell addressed in *Oil and Wine* are as pertinent today as they were when he put pen to paper. In *Oil and Wine*, he represents to us the church as an existential school for the construction of Christian theology. In this school one needs to reflect dialectically between the moral and civic values distinguished by a separation of Church and State. In this dialectic, he notes, the Church has made an ethical contribution to the Western

social order and civilization. In turn, Western society has made its historical and particular contribution to the evolution of the Church. Further, he claims that this dialectic has been tested and confirmed through the experience of the faithful living in the world. The Church, as institution, Tyrrell notes, is leavened and softened by those kindlier manners and gentler laws that have been developed in the civilization that the Church once nurtured with the milk of the Gospel.<sup>56</sup> When these kindlier manners and gentler laws, as he described them, are re-introduced into the Church they restore a fresh spirit and bear fruit once more, as re-constructed Christian theology. An individual's response to these kindlier manners and gentler laws will always be unequal. That is, no two responses will be identical but they may be similar. Such inequality is accounted for by the many personal factors in the individual's make-up that determine the receptivity of the spirit.

Tyrrell speaks of the oil and wine metaphorically. He means not the oil and wine characteristic of joy and happiness, but rather characteristic of medicine. He cites the physician in the gospel story who bound the traveller's wounds. Metaphorically, the oil and wine clear the eye of the soul so that it may see more clearly in reflecting and constructing a Christian theology. In other words, the oil and wine enable one to see beyond the visible confines of the institutional church and perceive it as a school for constructing a Christian theology. Having clearer eyes, we see the elements of Catholic Christianity that some other Christians, as well as non-Christians, cannot see.

Since Christians live in community certain questions arise: What type of religious community is available for the faithful? What type of Church do the faithful constitute? To Tyrrell, it seemed that no public consensus existed regarding the constitution of a unified religious community or Church. He was convinced, like William Gladstone, that without such consensus, individual Christians drift in their life into psychological angst. Living in the Victorian



England, Tyrrell's ideas reflected the social construct of a nation and church unified within a common culture. Gladstone, as well, presupposed this to be the case. It is clear that Tyrrell had in view the existence of a community composed of the greater number of citizens who supposedly shared a common culture and belief system but, in fact, there was no such identifiable community. Without the support of a common culture and religious belief system the faithful run the risk of spiritual harm, Tyrrell believed. According to him, for many of the faithful, religion played no authentic part in their lives due to the lack of a common culture and belief. He has remarked that when no public unity of faith or practice is professed, the great mass of those who depend on imitation and gregariousness for their belief are lost to religion.<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, they lose the institutional church as an existential school for the construction of a Christian theology. The institutional Church, as an existential school for the construction of a Christian theology, cannot be merely a theoretical entity without any recognisable visible form. Tyrrell clearly believes that individuals require some concrete form of institutional religious expression from which to construct Christian theology.

In *External Religion*, Tyrrell attempted to sketch out his understanding of an organized religion and its role in the construction of a Christian theology. At a time in which the classical notion of natural law had not yet been dislodged from public acceptance, Tyrrell readily accepted its principles. Thus, he presumed that religion and civilization are natural to humanity. However, humanity is capable of perverting religious and civilized activity. John Ralston Saul provides an example of such misuse of reason in his extensive work, *Voltaire's Bastards* in which he attempts to account for corrupted Western thinking.<sup>58</sup> Theology traditionally serves to interpret religion. Like reason, theology can be perverted and diverted from its proper purpose and made to serve particular polemical ends. Religion, as an expression of our inborn spiritual instincts

and appetites, requires theology as an interpreter to help the faithful reflect upon a proper construction of Christian theology. Tyrrell notes that the Christian life does not confine itself to concrete experience alone but it also encounters the transcendent. The Christian shares in the life of God through participation in the divine life as offered and revealed by God. The unique example of this shared life is Jesus of Nazareth. The life of Jesus the Messiah, being an incarnated life, is the prototype of God's spirit in the flesh. Thus, like Jesus, Christians being incarnated lives of God's spirit listening to God's voice within, (individually) they will recognise God's voice when it speaks from without (collectively).

How is it that the institutional Church is a school for the construction of Christian theology? Tyrrell does not answer this question in the traditional manner. Unlike Gladstone, he sees beyond the question of baptism as the sacrament incorporating the believer into the Church and looks to a transcendent relationship between the believer and God. The individual's response to an invitation from God discloses a transcendent relationship between the believer and God. The construction of Christian theology requires the co-operation of two distinct entities. The first is God and the second is the individual believer. Within this dialectic, initiative meets initiative, and subject meets subject. As Tyrrell notes: "It is, from beginning to end, a matter of choice; first of His choice, then of ours."<sup>59</sup> The inadequacy of classical philosophical formulation requires ever-newer forms to be generated from existential philosophy for the construction of Christian theology. Classically the philosophical form of analysis reasons from cause to effect. Given the classical ontological understanding, God is posited as the first cause or the unmoved mover. The inevitable result of this understanding has been an idealistic deism precluding a divine encounter within the world. The unmoved mover cannot be moved to engage creation. By way of contrast, an existential or phenomenological way of thinking reflects the interior

awareness of God as revealed in personal experience. Tyrrell concluded that an existential school of constructing Christian theology develops from knowing God in personal experience more than from external observation.

Tyrrell notes in *Lex Credendi* that if we see Christ's spirit in us, we become responsive to it. We know the spirit, not through metaphysical insight, but through thoughts, feelings, utterances and affects the spirit has upon us. In short, we know the spirit existentially. Tyrrell notes that, notwithstanding objective truth, feelings are more accurate than metaphysical ideals when it comes to understanding the truth. He distinguishes between the objective truths of the intellect and the subjective truths of feelings. In short, he claims that what we feel is truer than what we know. Walter Kasper echoes the same thought in his lecture "The Church and Contemporary Pluralism."<sup>60</sup> After examining the thought of the ancient Greeks, Tyrrell writes that the Greek philosopher was inclined to be more interested in Christology than in Christ; in the metaphysics of the Spirit, than in the fruits of the Spirit; in the theory of life than in living.<sup>61</sup> It follows then, that the believer may give of himself or herself to God's work, God's will, God's cause, yet not to God, and thus fail to participate fully in the construction of Christian theology. The Church, as an existential school for the construction of Christian theology, constitutes the developmental context for the individual Christian's interior growth. The Christian faithful live in *medio ecclesia*, that is, within the believing community. As a result, Tyrrell understands the *ecclesia* in a personal and existential sense, that is, phenomenologically, rather than in an institutional or bureaucratic sense, that is, ideally.

The Russian existentialist philosopher Nicolas Berdyaev suggests that George Tyrrell's model of Church is strikingly similar to the Russian notion of *sobornost*. Berdyaev records that Tyrrell does not set Protestant individualism against Catholic authoritative doctrine, but he sets forth a peculiar spiritual collectivity, similar to

sobornost or Russian Orthodox “Catholicity.”<sup>62</sup> Berdyaev explains that in this conception the church is indeed an external objective reality. However, sobornost is not a collective reality that stands higher than the human person. Rather, it is the highest spiritual power in the human person that enters communion with the living and the dead in a particular historical and cultural context. In this sense, the Church is an adaptation of spirit to existential conditions. Thus, the Church is not merely an existential organization, although it manifests itself in that form. Rather, it offers a life-style that consists of a real community in Christ. In Christ, the church consists of freedom and love. Thus, no external authority constitutes it.

Similarly, in discussing eternal life, Baron Friedrich von Hügel, in his understanding, does not require that religious life conform to a specific institutional practice. However, some form of institutional context is required to accommodate religious practice. Baron von Hügel, a contemporary of Tyrrell, wrote about Christian life in *medio ecclesia*. The combining of the Christian life with institutionalism has led to much misunderstanding and to a frustrating problematic in the interpretation of the religious experience in our time. For von Hügel, the Christian life is eternal life. Through his studies, he discerned that the construction of Christian theology, which ultimately equates with eternal life, reflects our earthly existential condition. In his book, *Eternal Life*, he addresses various existential issues that arise concerning the Christian life. He is aware of “embodied truth” and remains conscious of the body, of the senses, and the physical environment within the development of the spiritual and religious life. By this awareness he wished to avoid the problems and conflicts of his time over church authority. However, he could not avoid, or even minimise, these existential questions totally and he engaged in the construction of Christian theology as an existential activity.<sup>63</sup> Von Hügel concluded, therefore, that eternal life, which began with conscious reflection upon the Christian life was not divorced from the human

context but somehow, is incarnated in human activity and religious practice. Like Tyrrell, von Hügel believed that spiritual beliefs have practical consequences. “Eternal Life,” he writes, “is no substitute for either God or man; but it is the activity, the effect, of God, or of man, or of both.”<sup>64</sup>

Tyrrell observed that the construction of Christian theology had emerged more from individual example and the schools of theology than from the formal doctrines of the institutional Church. Historical criticism shows us that all substantial advancement has been the work, not of officials, but of individuals almost in opposition to officials; not of a system, but of those who have, to some extent, corrected and modified the system. The modern understanding of ecclesial organization, as taught by Vatican II, reflects Tyrrell’s preferred understanding of *in medio ecclesia*. However, Tyrrell expanded his understanding of the *ecclesia* to include the world as the place or school wherein one may ponder the Divine. This was a prophetic insight on his part. Critical reflection on our worldly experience is current in contemporary spirituality and anthropological theological thinking. As believers, critical reflection on our experience confirms our world as divine. Tyrrell notes that to believe in the Church, as a Catholic, is to believe in humanity. He believes that to regard the world outside the Church as God-forsaken and to deny that God works and reveals himself in human history is a subtle and dangerous form of atheism.

Today, Catholic theologians recognize that Tyrrell anticipated some of the thinking of Vatican II. He called upon the Church to deconstruct the very concepts of medievalism that were incapable of meeting the needs of the time. Tyrrell set about to analyse the experience of faith by using philosophical and scientific insights derived from his context. If Tyrrell did not directly influence, he certainly anticipated, the *nouvelle théologie* of theologians like Hans Urs von Balthasar and Yves Congar, whose thinking emerged after World War II, and played a

significant role at the Second Vatican Council. I suggest, as well, that Tyrrell anticipated the neo-Thomistic revival of Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson and the transcendental Thomism of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan. Tyrrell was among those Catholic theologians who first recognised that philosophy had moved beyond the reified scholasticism, which had developed by the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Theology, Tyrrell maintained, must now engage anew with the world in order to interpret the Christian experience as opposed to reminiscing about romanticised visions of the past. What we need, he seems to have maintained, for constructing Christian theology is an existential philosophy recognizing current political, social and religious issues. Doubt, or the crisis of existential meaning, often arises from the failure of outdated ideas to carry the meaning of our present experience. When this happens, we are disposed to question what we previously believed, but we do not doubt what we previously experienced. Questioning our previous experience, not doubting what we previously believed, assists us in discarding our outdated concepts of interpretation. Doubting belief, unlike questioning experience, is rooted in a loss of faith in God and a subsequent replacement by faith in ourselves. This is an unhealthy, narcissistic attitude.

In our acts of worship and adoration, it is an error on our part to remain focused on the creature and not recognise the action of the Creator. Our experience reveals that the need to adore and to worship constitutes our humanity. Our experience further reveals that adoration or worship makes possible a personal opportunity for the construction of Christian theology. In worship and in adoration the barriers around the self are transcended and we participate in the eternal life of that which is Infinite while, at the same time, acknowledging that which is finite in our own life. According to Maude Petre, a personal and intimate friend of George Tyrrell, we come to participate in

the revelation of God's infinite life through interior knowledge gained in acts of adoration and worship.<sup>65</sup>

George Tyrrell left no systematic account of his views. His short life was largely taken up in controversy. However, upon examination, two significant insights become evident. First, Tyrrell contrasted the concept of an unchanging and formalized truth with a living and dynamic experience of the faith. Second, he held that a belief is best tested through experience and subsequently evaluated by the fruit it bears in this life. A belief, for Tyrrell, is not a theoretical concept formulated with the aid of a metaphysical philosophy. A belief is more than that. It results in practical consequences that affect the temporal life. Further, the consequences of belief are not limited to temporal life. Beliefs that prove fruitful re-present to us the realities of the eternal Christian life. It is in and through our practical, that is, temporal or existential situation that we enter upon the eternal Christian life.

With the death of Tyrrell in 1909 the Modernist influence in English Roman Catholicism came to an end. Some of the laymen who had been connected by ties of personal friendship with the Modernist leaders were, for a time, suspect by Church authorities. Wilfrid Ward was denounced to Rome for heresy, but cleared. Baron von Hügel, who had introduced Tyrrell to New Testament criticism, held views close to the Modernist view of history, but far removed from the immanent philosophy of the Modernists. Thus, Francis Cardinal Bourne, in whose diocese von Hügel resided, did not condemn the Baron. With respect to Maude Petre she thought that the Modernist agenda was becoming a "lost cause" in her day. In contrast to her views, however, Ellen Leonard is more optimistic and along with her I recognize the Modernist agenda as influencing questions that are very much alive today. Leonard writes: Maude "finally came to the conviction that a lifetime, even a long lifetime like hers, was too short for the kind of changes the 'modernists' had envisioned.

Although modernism might be dead, the questions with which it dealt were still very much alive.”<sup>66</sup>

The construction of Christian theology arises within the life of the faith community composed of individuals who seek to relate to each other and express their common meaning. Theological constructions have their foundation in lived history, not in the so-called historical problem, but in problems that arise in the existential events of history that, in turn, bind individuals and communities together. In my theological construction, I take seriously the legacy of the Enlightenment and George Tyrrell as influencing my thought and view religion as an historical and human phenomenon. To place on record what has been perceived as taking place is not history, but only information, or data. History depends upon that which is consciously selected for recording. The truth of history depends on existential interpretation. Thus, the question arises: What is the nature of those principles determining what is selected and recorded by historians and to what degree have those principles been held by later interpreters in the same field? The past cannot be seen as hardened and dead, with respect to the present, nor can those individuals whose lives have shaped the past be ignored. Though they may be dead, awareness of their contribution to the common good continues to shape the present. The past exists, not by virtue of right, but by virtue of being useful and significant to the present. If human history is to have any meaning and influence in Christian theological construction, it must be related to the lives, purposes and wills of the men and women through whose experiences it has been revealed as has been shown in the case of George Tyrrell.



## CONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND ORTHODOX CANON LAW

### Introduction

I present this short section as the second case study of Christian theological construction that I am examining in this book. This section is not intended as an historical survey of the development of Orthodox Canon Law. I do not offer an interpretation of particular collections or codes of canon laws. Nor do I assess the laws themselves as to whether or not they are still applicable to our current situation. Further, I am not examining the relationship between culture and Orthodox Canon Law. Nor, in this examination will I be comparing Roman Canon Law with Orthodox Canon Law. Yet, elements from each of the above will be discussed in the following pages. So why do I undertake this case study? I do so in response to Alexander Schmemmann's call for a re-examination of the controversy over Orthodox Canon Law in America. According to Schmemmann, "certain assumptions on which the whole controversy in America seems to be grounded and which are in fact a very serious distortion of the Orthodox canonical tradition," need to be re-examined.<sup>67</sup> I believe that some of the certain assumptions that contribute to the very serious distortions of Canon law, of which he speaks, are philosophical and therefore transcend the law itself. What I discuss, then, may be applied to the Eastern and Western traditions of Canon Law leading to a further clarification of the intent of the law in either tradition. That is so since the legislators of each tradition may make accommodation and modification to the laws in light of any existential philosophical perspectives raised in Christian theological construction. Thus, this case study focuses a phenomenological philosophical interpretation of law as it is experienced in every-day life. That is to say, I do not presume that any law is a given datum from a source external to experience. Law, being socially constructed, is

not an ideally given construct. For this reason any process of social construction needs to be philosophically analyzed to determine how it gives birth to law.

Earlier in this work, I offered a preliminary explanation of my philosophical development from a classical perspective to a phenomenological one. This was done in Section II. Some readers, those primarily interested in Canon Law, may choose to continue reading here and only later return to read the account of my particular philosophical point of view.

Even though law is not an ideal construct I understand it to be a “real phenomenon” in that it has intelligibility independently of my personal desire. That is, the law is “there” whether I like it or not. I cannot wish it away when it does not serve my interests or when I find it restrictive of my interests. The law is there because it is a social reality that has arisen within the collective consciousness of individuals living in community. The social construction of reality, in which I participate, is undertaken in light of a philosophical basis, which depends upon my individual experience interpreted in a given culture. My cultural experience is expressed in philosophical terms. Sometimes these philosophical terms become cloudy, or obscure, such that they impede my personal growth rather than promote my personal growth. This impediment occurs on an individual basis as well as a collective basis. The religious philosopher, George Grant, suggests a remedy for this cloudy and obscure situation. He said: “In a period when meaning has become obscure, or to use another language, when God seems absent, the search must be for a new authentic meaning that includes within itself the new conditions that make that search necessary. It must be a philosophical and theological search.”<sup>68</sup> He presumes, as I do, that God is required for humans to make sense and meaning out of their lives.

The search for a new authentic meaning, as suggested by Grant, is inherent in the broad philosophical and theological point of view, which underpins the formulation

of Canon Law – both East and West. I am not concerned, at this point, with the laws themselves, but rather with the social point of view, understood philosophically and theologically, that has occasioned their construction. Therefore, I focus on the disciplines that are auxiliary to and supportive of canon law. Here my thinking follows that of Panteleimon Rodopoulos, who has identified two such auxiliary disciplines. The first is theology proper and the second is the subordinate discipline of the science of law. The first, he notes, encompasses dogmatics, ethics, patrology, liturgics, and pastoral theology all relating to the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Scriptures. The second, pertains to the science of law, includes a philosophy of law in general and, Greco-Roman Law and Hebrew law in particular and, laws of the Nation State in which the Orthodox Church is present.<sup>69</sup>

The problem of Orthodox Canon Law and its development in America has not been solved by various “attempts simply to ‘reduce’ it to some pattern of the past” according to Alexander Schmemmann.<sup>70</sup> The solution, I suggest, is to be found in the re-construction of the philosophical and theological approach as previously noted by Grant. I believe that Schmemmann is correct when he says that something has happened in the Church and in the world that “requires from theology a new effort of reflection a renewed ‘reading’ of Tradition.”<sup>71</sup> This section then is my meager attempt at a new reflection on Canon Law, Eastern and Western, in our contemporary North American context. Schmemmann joins Nicholas Afanasiev in noting this change, which I believe is an evolutionary one and in keeping with our current understanding of the nature of philosophical development. He says that “the face of the earth is changing; mankind is entering unknown and unexplored paths, and we ourselves, just like our children, do not know under what new conditions we will be living.”

<sup>72</sup> The concern for the church arises within her self-consciousness, that is, the experience of her present presence not the experience of her past life, nor any

imaginary anticipated life, which is yet to be rendered concrete. Within this self-conscious philosophical point of view, the past is memory and the future is fiction, with neither presenting themselves in the present. Marshall McLuhan, an early pioneer in the philosophy of communications media, being interviewed in 1977 on the future of the Church said: "I would say it is a wide open question whether the Church has any future at all as a Greco-Roman institution. It would be a good time to be Russian Orthodox: they split off from Rome because it was too literate. The Eastern Church is an "ear" Church; Rome was always very far along the visual road to visual power."

<sup>73</sup> My examination of the assumptions of Orthodox Canon Law continues with five examples of theological construction as outlined below.

#### Theological Construction and the Philosophical Purpose of Canon Law

Humans, unlike other living creatures, have no species-specific environment. Our environment is necessarily structured by our own instinctual organizational abilities. Our human world is open to, but not limited to, biological existence. That which characterizes humanity is a socio-cultural variable. There is no nature, as a biological substratum, that determines what makes us human. Rather, something in our environment works with us to make humanness happen. Our humanity is thus determined within an anthropological context. It is unique to humans that our habitual activity in one area generates the context for deliberation and innovation in other areas of our activity. Deliberation and innovation, which reveal intent, are creative activities that remove the need to perpetually invent solutions to identical human problems.

Phenomenologically, society is conceived as a social product. Phenomenologically, society subjectively reveals reality in its relational form. Similarly, law is conceived as a social product. Law subjectively reveals reality in its

relational form, as well. Law that leaves out subjectively conceived relational reality and is based merely on theory is inadequate law. The institution of law is “dead” unless “brought to life” in subjective human action. Thus, I inquire philosophically: What is the scope of the meaning of law within the activity of the faithful? Is there an area of life’s activity regulated by law in comparison to the area of life’s activity that is unregulated? I do recognize that the philosophical foundation of law is capable of attaining an intelligible autonomy and independence from its social or community base. Law changes as society changes. A question I have often asked myself is: Institutionally, is the law to keep “outsiders” out and “insiders” in? The relationship between law and its social, that is, philosophical base is a dialectical one, not a mechanical one. Thus, when law becomes reified, or mechanized, it becomes dehumanized and constitutes a world over which humans have no control. According to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, “another way of saying this is that reification is the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something else than human products—such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will.”<sup>74</sup>

According to John Erickson, over time, a canon came to be understood as a rule, made by a council rather than a norm that reflected the mind of the Church, which defined one’s status within the Church.

This shift in the meaning of ‘canon’ is but one aspect of the veritable metamorphosis that the canonical tradition underwent following the conversion of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as the favored, and then the official, religion of the Roman empire. The Church came to enjoy many of the rights, privileges, exemptions and benefits that the pagan cults earlier had enjoyed under public law. In turn, however, its ‘constitution’ and structures had to be clearly defined and expressed in terms of law, if only because government officials needed to

know who legally represented the Church. Here earlier canonical literature was unsatisfactory.”<sup>75</sup>

It has been suggested that civilization is the art of living in towns such that that everyone does not know everyone else.<sup>76</sup> Traditionally, the art of civilized living has required a philosophical, theological, political and legal outlook on the part of the members of society. As civilized societies the Orthodox Churches lay greater stress on the mystical and invisible elements of their constitution, which is why they have not assigned a secular and legalistic character to their organization.<sup>77</sup> Orthodox Churches are often understood in terms of their social organization, their structures, while their philosophical and theological purposes are ignored or misunderstood.<sup>78</sup> Philosophically, the ecclesia in secular Greek connotes a community being ‘called out’ to an assembly in its own right. For Christians the ecclesia constitutes itself through a particular theological construction. Thus, philosophical and theological discernment is needed on the part of the members of the ecclesial community to fulfill their spiritual purpose. Erickson notes this required discernment by members of the Church and remarks: “For the most part, even when dealing with new situations, they do not attempt to ‘make’ laws but rather to ‘find’ the Church’s canon, whether in scripture or in tradition.”<sup>79</sup>

Canon Laws are better understood not as subjecting a person to subservience but, rather, as attempting to guarantee the freedom of the faithful within the Church. That is the essential difference between Canon and Civil Law. In an Orthodox understanding of the theological construction of Canon Law, the Church is to provide herself with the necessary means of survival as a divine social reality. Over time the community of faith came to be associated with a juridical organization. This does not mean that the community of faith was reduced to a legal institution. However, this distinction is an important one in light of the Church’s philosophical and theological purpose

to guarantee the freedom of the faithful as reflected in its Canon Laws.

### Theological Construction and the Origin of Canon Law in the Will of God

Law is capable of intelligible objectification. Such intelligible objectification allows law to survive the subjective moment that made the law. Intelligible objectification is signification, that is, the production of signs. A sign carries a specific intention to serve as an explicit indication of subjective meaning, but this meaning needs interpretation in light of its original context, which may not fit all cases of human experience. Here, I mean objectification phenomenologically, that is, as objectivity, not as objectivism, which is the classical understanding. Canon Law has its origin in a “face-to-face” encounter with the other, God. But Canons become detached from their original context as new encounters are experienced. By social convention, the legal system is distinguished from other sign systems since meanings often change as we speak. Signs, for instance, have fixed meanings, whereas, laws are truly symbols, not signs, whose meanings are not fixed. In effect, as symbolical, Canon Law makes present, as it were, the divine presence in my present moment.

As a matter of fact, the Orthodox Churches never provided themselves with a complete system of canon law. The canons of the Ecumenical Councils, which they acknowledge as authentic, were regarded as expressions of the Churches’ nature, a jurisprudence of the Holy Spirit, as it were, reflecting the eternal order within the Body of Christ. These Churches never formed themselves into a juridical super-government and never looked upon themselves as a means by which to exercise an effective control over all members of the Church.<sup>80</sup> However, not all Orthodox share this view. Panteleimon Rodopoulos has written: “If God grants me life, I shall attempt to compose

as full a system as possible of the Canon Law of the Orthodox Catholic Church”<sup>81</sup>

John Dewey and James Tufts, writing from within a civil perspective, offer this insight, which assists in understanding Orthodox Canon Law. The obligation to obey the law is not “this is the custom,” or “our fathers did so”; rather, the faithful accept Christ as their God and lawgiver.<sup>82</sup> From within an ecclesial perspective, Rodopoulos writes: “Within the Church, the will of Jesus Christ prevails and is sovereign, not as the will of one standing outside the Church, but as the will of the Head of the body of the Church, through whom the faithful are united in the communion of the new people of God.”<sup>83</sup> From this understanding, the Latin Church has the opportunity to learn two lessons according to Johanness Neumann. The first is that “the juridical order of the Church ‘grew’ out of various social presuppositions” and the second is that canonical norms are limited and conditioned by time, which prevents them from becoming permanent.<sup>84</sup>

From a Latin perspective, it is only when Canon Law accepts social changes that the Church can achieve her purpose as intended by Pius XII, which is that the Church should form humanity according to the law of Christ by adaptation to the actual conditions of time and place.<sup>85</sup> It is historically evident that the faithful are free to change and to create forms of Church life but these forms are not always correctly constructed. There cannot be a single, nor permanent, canonical formulation because every historical period has its own canonical consciousness. Consciousness is only of the present, not the past or future. Therefore, Canon Law, consciously formulated, can only reflect the present existential context of the faithful. It must be remembered that not one of Christ’s commandments has the status of a positive norm. His commandments are eternal, immutable, and all relate to dogmas concerning the Church. Thus, there is no true separation between divine and human law. There is only a philosophical and



theological distinction to enable the faithful to discern the will of God.

Patrick Viscuso has described the development of ecclesiastical law as the growth of the theandrical commonwealth of the Logos in the world.<sup>86</sup> Thus the Canons are incarnations of God's mind for the circumstances in which the faithful find themselves. The reduction of canon law to mere temporal law is not possible because its source within the theandrical commonwealth is divine. In Eastern and Western understanding Canon Law is related to suffering for the sake of the Gospel and Church. In short, Canons are extensions of the Gospel, which, in turn, reflect the work of redemption of the Word Incarnate through the will of God.

#### Theological Construction and Time in Canon Law

The world of everyday life is structured in space and in time. Spatial construction of the world of everyday life has little to do with law except that my space intersects with the space others. The temporality of the past, the present and the future, influences the law. This time is inter-subjectively experienced by members of the community in which the social construction of Canon Law is undertaken within the sequence of past, present and future events. Thus, law, as is language, is "capable of becoming the objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience, which it can preserve in time and transmit to following generations."<sup>87</sup> Theological construction seeks philosophical unity. George Grant has noted: "The function of the philosopher is...to think how the various sides of truth that have made themselves explicit in history may be known in their unity."<sup>88</sup> The teachings of Jesus, upon which Canon Law is founded, do not have their origin within a bicameral mind, characteristic of scholastic philosophy. Rather, they have their origin within the consciousness of a unified mind, characteristic of a

phenomenological philosophy. Insightfully, in support of this understanding, Julian Jaynes writes of Jesus' intent:

The attempted reformation of Judaism by Jesus can be construed as a necessarily new religion for conscious men rather than bicameral men. Behavior must now be changed from within the new consciousness rather than from Mosaic laws carving behavior from without. Sin and penance are now within conscious desire and conscious contrition, rather than in external behaviors of the decalogue and the penances of temple sacrifice and community punishment. The divine kingdom to be regained is psychological not physical. It is metaphorical not literal. It is 'within' not in extensor.<sup>89</sup>

The history of Christianity, as an asocial construction, is not true to its founder. The construction of the Christian Church seems to be perpetually influenced by bicameral thinking that takes away from the inner conscious kingdom of agape.

History occurs through time. And through her historical forms the Church exists. Also, history abides in the Church. In the Church and through the Church the historical process reflects the social construction through time.<sup>90</sup> In her history the civil and public constructions of the Church, her Eastern experience, reflect the national and social composition of the Roman Empire.<sup>91</sup> Although, the Church may follow civil laws and orders of the state, these laws and orders are not the source of Canon Law. Therefore, as abnormal canonical constructions they will be eliminated with the passage of time. We know that social agents, collectively and individually, bring about change. Some change is intended and some change is not. The activity of these social agents, as Dewey and Tufts correctly note, occurs "in an organized world of action; in social arrangement and institutions. So far as such combinations of individuals are current or stable, their nature and operations are definitely formulated and definitely enforceable."<sup>92</sup> Except for being "definitely enforceable"

this observation applies to the social construction of Orthodox Canon Law within its historical context.

In due time, asks Ivan Žužek, will there be a common code of Canon Law for the Orthodox Churches? His answer, given about forty years ago, is an optimistic one and judging by the current theological construction within American Orthodoxy some progress is being made in that direction. He writes: "Suffice it to say that, in view of the Codes that have already been revamped in some churches and of the valuable works published in recent years by Orthodox canonists, pessimism with regard to the task of preparing for a Common Code does not seem to be justified."<sup>93</sup> Based on my experience I cannot agree with his optimism. In the contemporary social construction of American society there is no opportunity for Orthodoxy to acquire a uniform identity. America's historical and current social development is characterized by a multinational social construction. This multinational social construction presents a challenge, from a cultural point of view, as Orthodoxy attempts to integrate into American society. This multinational social construction presents the possibility for a philosophical and theological approach to integration within American culture, not from a classical and traditional point of view that presumes identification between Orthodoxy and culture but, rather, from a socially constructed point of view that presents a dynamic understanding of the relationship between Orthodoxy and culture.

Protestantism and Catholicism in their own way distinguish between the *jus humanum* and the *jus ecclesiasticum*. However, to the bicameral mind these two jurisdictions, the *jus humanum* and the *jus ecclesiasticum*, are separate and have acquired a certain self-containment in the modern context. The *jus humanum*, as a separate legal concept, was unknown to the Orthodoxy of the ancient Church as well as to the Byzantine theologians and philosophers of the 12th Century. Since the Church's Canon Law arises from the essence of the believing

community, not any external structure developed over and in time, the Canon Laws do not establish the organization of the Church as a mechanism but “are a kind of canonical interpretation of the dogmas for a particular moment of the Church’s historical existence” within the temporal order.<sup>94</sup> In short, an Orthodox understanding is that the canons express the eternal in the temporal.

#### Theological Construction and Canon Law in Discipline and Conscience

According to Roscoe Pound, in North America a nineteenth century phenomenon was that many jurists believed they had developed a self-sufficient science of law not in need of any philosophical apparatus.”<sup>95</sup> Yet, it is obvious that there are social issues requiring legal philosophical thinking. One is the need for general security and peace and order. Another is the need for continual compromises because of the continual changes in society. Thus, legal philosophers sought to standardize these social needs through a universal law that would last forever. In ancient Greece, Pound tells us, Demosthenes instructed an Athenian jury that there are four reasons the law ought to be obeyed. One, because laws were given by God; two, laws formed a tradition taught by wise men; three, because laws were deduced from an eternal and immutable code; and four, because laws expressed agreements within society binding its members to a moral duty to keep promises.

This understanding led to a civil and non-Orthodox purpose of law. That is, a theory of authority of law which would impose reason, or rules, upon those who were subject to law in an amorphous legal order, that is, legal decisions made without regard to the subject or his or her context. This is the unique Greek contribution to the philosophy of law, the distinction of law itself apart from and the rules of law. This contribution was developed further during the transition of Greek law, which was particularly applicable to the citizens of a city, to the

universal understanding of law applicable to the inhabitants of the world. It must be remembered that Greek law applied differently to the citizen and non-citizen. As the feudal society of Europe broke down new forms of commerce, empirical colonization and the discovery of other continents gave the newly established nations the opportunity to construct a unified law within their national boundaries. In their construction, history illustrates that Protestant legalistic thinkers of the sixteenth century introduced a philosophical understanding that incorporated a divinely ordained state and a natural law. However, being based on independent reason, Protestant understanding of natural law was problematically divorced from theology, which was not the case with Catholic legal thinkers.

According to Richard Horsley, Ernest Troeltsch advanced the view that Stoicism sets the basis for the preparation of the gospel with regard to the “law of nature” in Christian theology. But, this view has been challenged by Helmut Koester who discovered the phrase “law of nature” to be extremely rare prior to Philo of Alexandria with whom the concept was introduced. Yet, the law of nature idea is found in Cicero who wrote in Latin two generations earlier. Therefore, Horsely concludes that, “the parallel passages on the law of nature in Philo and Cicero derive ultimately from a Stoic tradition on universal law and right reason.” But that tradition in turn had been reinterpreted, “by a revived and eclectic Platonism upon which both Cicero and Philo drew” <sup>96</sup> Thus, the Stoic tradition understood the universe as governed by reason, or law, inherent in nature, which in its original state was identified with God, Horsely observed. Since Philo and Cicero clearly distinguished law from God, he maintains, we are led to look for the reshaping of Stoic natural law doctrine under Platonic influence prior to both Cicero and Philo.

Philosophical eclecticism, in the sense of selecting what is best from different systems of thought, is an indication of a creative search for new combinations of ideas to replace

the philosophical schools of thought no longer adequate for our times. The idea of a divine lawgiver and the Stoic concept of natural law have been taken over by Hellenistic Jewish philosophy and subsequently by Christian philosophy. As a result, Catholic legal thinkers founded a system of laws based on limiting human action even though, they viewed humans as free rational creatures. Thus, in Latin law the limiting of human action and of positive law reflected the nature and the limits of the state. Whereas, canonists within Orthodoxy “must search out those norms for structure and conduct that necessarily arise from and conform to the very nature of the Church as the spirit-filled body of Christ,” and not those norms that characterize the nature and construct of the state.<sup>97</sup> A new period of growth within the ecclesial society, that is, the church, due to the decline traditional authority demanded a new philosophical discipline and conscience. The demand was to make a new legal order and to enact Canon Laws such that they would be a faithful copy of the natural ideal of law, in the Greek classical sense. “Nature” did not mean to the classical Greek thinkers, who lacked any understanding of evolutionary theory, what it means to contemporary thinkers. For ancient Greeks, the law’s nature was its perfection, not its dynamic being and becoming within a context of relationships. As imported into the North American context, classical law represented, not the nature of human kind, but rather the nature of civil government. In the West, law has developed to protect natural rights. It was not intended for the salvation of souls. Although, to the contrary it seems in the new Code of Western Canon Law, the last Canon in the book states that the salvation of souls is to be the supreme law in the Church (C.C. 1752).

There are twelve conceptions of law distinguished by Pound that are worth reviewing at this point. One, law is divinely ordained and he cites the Mosaic laws and Hammurabi’s code as examples. Two, the law, as tradition, has been proved acceptable to the gods and thus humans

can follow it and act with security. Three, the law is the recorded wisdom of the sages who learned a safe way of life. Fourth, the law is a philosophically discovered system, which expresses the nature of things to which society's members ought to conform. Fifth, the law is a declaration of an eternal and immutable moral code. Six, the law is a body of political agreements governing relationships among those living in a given society. Seven, [Western] law, as a reflection of Thomistic thinking is a reflection of divine reasoning governing the universe and what must be done within creation. Eight, the law is a body of commands of a sovereign authority and is supported by whatever supports the sovereign's authority. This is a restatement of the classical Roman notion. Nine, the law is a system of norms discovered through human experience by which individuals realize their freedom together with the freedom of other like-minded individuals. Ten, the law is a system of principles, discovered philosophically to regulate the external action of members of society through juridical writings, which are based upon reason. This tenth point appeared in legislative commentary in the 19th century after the natural law theory declined in significance. Eleven, the law is a body of rules imposed upon society by the dominant class to further their own interest, consciously or unconsciously. And twelve, the law is made up of the dictates of the economic order or the social order with respect to human conduct discovered by observation and expressed in what would work, or not work, in the administration of justice as understood in the 19th century.<sup>98</sup> Clearly, displaying such a rational philosophical bias, these twelve concepts could never form the basis of an Orthodox Canon Law in light of the foregoing discussion.

That is so since the above legal perspective is designed to describe an institution that governs human actions. These perspectives are not oriented to salvation, even though it may be argued that they do depend upon some ultimate moral value upon which law is based. Among these twelve concepts listed by Pound, two elements are included that

limit the reform of law. The first is a static foundation that rejects any changes in human activity and, the second is an understanding of law that is mechanically absolute having been developed from a fixed starting point. As noted, civil law is to keep members of society in their proper place, not to lead to their salvation. “When St Paul exhorted wives to obey their husbands, and servants to obey their masters, and thus everyone to exert himself to do his duty in the class where the social order had put him, he expressed this Greek conception of the end of law,” says Pound.<sup>99</sup> But, the intent is changing in modern Western society. The interpretation of civil law is moving to include a metaphysical or a higher understanding than mere biological one. Proponents of this new theory insist that application of law involves not reason and logic only but also moral judgments made in particular situations and areas of behaviour, which are never exactly alike.

In the formation of Orthodox Canon Law scripture or patristic authors are not the ground of the law’s theological basis. The ground of the theological basis for Orthodox Canon Law is the experience of the Church. The twelve points listed above by Pound, notwithstanding the words of Michael Melchizedek, up to a point sum up the Orthodox position of discipline and conscience in the formulation of Orthodox Canon Law. Melchizedek writes: “Church canons differ essentially from secular law in the premise that the original source of Canon law has its authority in the will of God concerning the church here on earth. Consequently, church law is in direct relation to the purpose of salvation; its time extending beyond this life into the next; its scope, including conscience; and its place, i.e. the universal church”<sup>100</sup>

#### Theological Construction and Everyday Life in Orthodox Canon Law

Everyday life, being reality for the Orthodox faithful, is the locus for the theological construction of Canon Law. A



phenomenological analysis of this lived reality involves a subjective interpretation which leads to an intersubjective understanding among the faithful, that is, an understanding of life which is capable of being philosophically shared with others. In phenomenology there is no causal hypothesis as there is in classical philosophy. Nor is there any disclosure of the ontological status of the phenomena of everyday life. Every-day life appears to the conscious observer as already objectified. Such an objectified appearance is “the reality of everyday life [that] is organized around the ‘here’ of my body and the ‘now’ of my present.”<sup>101</sup> However, my “here and now” does not exhaust all reality, yet does embrace the past, the present and the future of which only my present consciousness is aware. Canon law reflects the here and now of everyday reality which we all share. However, such conscious reality is not identical with each person. This accounts for the conflicts in laws. Canon Law reflects nothing of one’s dreams, which are not shareable with others. The routine in everyday life is nonproblematic. However, changes in the routine of everyday life are problematic and occur as circumstances in everyday life are altered.

The Orthodox Churches never formulated doctrine through any particular philosophical system. Rather, they developed and lived out the great traditions of the Patristic Fathers, their theology, spirituality and sacramental conception of the Church. Orthodoxy has traditionally defined itself in contrast to Roman Catholicism. This contrast is merely sociological. However, like Roman Catholicism the Orthodox Churches must face the challenge of the modern world. As a visible society of living beings, Orthodoxy has need of re-organization through the regulation of canons, which sanctify her present life and activities, as well as sanctify the relationships among its members. In this way, the visible Orthodoxy will be formed into a society, with supernatural authority, whose spiritual powers are exercised with proper social organization and spiritual government. Thus, she will

be distinguished from all secular authority by her spiritual nature, purpose and means.

A final point is that the Church does not grow mechanically, but organically. There is a continuity of experience that reflects a living relationship, not an architectural relationship in Orthodoxy. Historically this organic relationship, which existed between the Moscow Bishop and the Russian missionaries sent to Alaska, was fractured by the Russian revolution.<sup>102</sup> The conscience of the Orthodox Churches cannot accept the thought of a mechanical adaptation to modern life, since that would constitute a secular victory over them by modern life. Out of their depths and essence, however, the Churches are searching to discover those organic forms of existence out of which to enact a redemptive role for Canon Law. The case is similar in Roman Catholicism. Eric McLuhan, son of Marshall McLuhan, has offered significant observations about the influence of the media on bureaucratic, administrative and institutional structures. Should there be a Vatican III it will be need to deal with contemporary social effects and the computerization of information. Orthodoxy may show a way for the future given Eric McLuhan's remarks. He quotes his father's words spoken in 1970. "In terms of, say, a computer technology, we are heading for cottage economies, where the most important industrial activities can be carried on in any little individual shack anywhere on the globe...In that sense, Christianity—in a centralized, administrative, bureaucratic form—is certainly irrelevant"<sup>103</sup> Edward Moore's reminder that the "Canon Law should apply to the members of a given Church calling itself Orthodox, but should not be used to validate or invalidate the existence of that Church, sums up this the main point of this section."<sup>104</sup>

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Allan Savage possesses earned doctorates in Theology from the University of South Africa (1993) and the St Elias School of Orthodox Theology (2007).

BY the SAME AUTHOR

*A Phenomenological Understanding of Certain Liturgical Texts: The Anglican Collects for Advent and the Roman Catholic Collects for Lent* (2001) [University of America Press]

This book examines the philosophical premises underlying the language used in liturgical prayers. Scholastic philosophy, the dominant philosophical perspective in the West, is no longer satisfactory for contemporary religious formulation. Phenomenological philosophy appears to be replacing scholastic philosophy in forming and understanding personal and communal religious beliefs. The Collects of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Eucharistic liturgies for Advent and Lent were examined, re-written and "field tested." The focus group, for field-testing, was composed of individuals who formally engage in research into spirituality and religious experiences. *A Phenomenological Understanding of Certain Liturgical Texts* encourages further investigation into the growing use of phenomenology in liturgical understanding based on a discernible trend in this direction.

*Faith, Hope and Charity as Character Traits in Adler's Individual Psychology: With Related Essays in Spirituality and Phenomenology* (2003) [University of America Press]

(Co-author Sheldon William Nicholl)

In Part One, Sheldon Nicholl offers an outline of Adler's life and the basics of his Individual Psychology. Allan Savage examines the relationship between Individual Psychology and Pastoral Theology. Special attention is given to the role of cognitive therapy. The cardinal virtues of faith, hope and charity are explored, in some detail, in the context of Adler's

Individual Psychology. As character traits they are found to be in accord with the development of Adler's notion of *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*. Part Two is a compilation of previously published essays in American and British journals. One section consists of a set of six exchanges between Erik Mansager and Allan Savage over the concept of "critical collaboration." Other previously published essays by Savage incorporate Adlerian themes. However, chapter eight is not specifically Adlerian in content. Since the root of Adler's Individual Psychology is anchored in German philosophical thought of the early 1900's this chapter explores notions derived from the later Heidegger and the thought of Husserl.

*A Contemporary Understanding of Religious Belief within Mental Health* (2007) [Melrose Books, UK]

This short book suggests the need for psychiatrists to work with the knowledge of theology so that mentally ill patients who hold strong religious beliefs may receive appropriate treatment. The work is introduced by discussing the definition of mental illness, the meaning of religious belief in modern society and the view that psychiatry has of it. He states that 'Theology can make a significant contribution to the integration of mental health and religious belief'. Reverend Savage promotes the phenomenological approach to understanding religious belief, an approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience. He claims that secularisation in modern society has caused '...a fracture between religion and spirituality'. He then discusses how society influences the form that religious belief takes and how it decides what is or what is not 'normal'. The author explains how psychiatry today is a combination of psychoanalysis and the chemical management of neurological processes. It is debatable whether general practitioners should prescribe antidepressants without prior consultation with a

psychiatrist. The role of the psychiatrist seems to be diminishing, but ‘there is no question that for the near future the psychiatrist will remain a moral agent on behalf of the community’; a position that was traditionally held by priests. Reverend Savage writes in a very learned style and his book may be a useful addition to the bookshelves of undergraduate and practising psychiatrists.

*The Ecology: A "New to You" View: An Orthodox Theological Ecology* (2008) [[www.Artbookbindery.com](http://www.Artbookbindery.com)]

The ideas presented in this book, in fact, are not new. They represent problems arising from the new orientation of the Western World that followed the Great War of 1914-1918. Much contemporary theology still deals with issues that have been identified as “Modernism” by the ecclesiastical authorities of an earlier day. What is new in this book, however, is a phenomenological theological consideration in the context of a contemporary global ecology, and not in the context of the traditional ecclesiastical politics of Eastern and Western Church.